

THE STATE MUSEUM
MODEL OF DENVER
IN 1860

1. City Hall.
2. Wootton's attic: birthplace of the News.
3. Second home of the News.
4. Third home of the News.
5. The Rocky Mountain News Building washed away in the flood of 1864.
6. The Apollo Theater.
7. Tremont House

8. The Rocky Mountain Herald.
9. Elephant Corral.
10. Denver House.
11. Arapaho Indian Village.
12. Louisiana Saloon.
13. The first hospital.
14. The first school.
15. Criterion Saloon.

PHOTOGRAPH BY BILL PEERY

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Perkin

The first hundred years

kansas city



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THE FIRST HUNDRED YEARS

AUG 1959

THE FIRST HUNDRED YEARS

An Informal History of Denver
and the
Rocky Mountain News

by
ROBERT L. PERKIN

With a Foreword by
GENE FOWLER

Garden City, New York
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To the Men and Women of the
ROCKY MOUNTAIN NEWS,
Past and Present, and Especially to the Memory of
WILLIAM NEWTON BYERS:
“. . . pass-crossover of a pure American breed . . .”

Foreword

WHEN in the early morning I put aside this book by Robert L. Perkin, I felt as though I had been reading a love letter to two of my old sweethearts: the City of Denver, and the *Rocky Mountain News*. The city and the newspaper had to wait one hundred years for someone capable of seeing the spiritual as well as the physical bond between the newspaper and the city which is its twin sister.

These fair sisters were born the same year; together they have shared a noteworthy heritage. Their lives, as Mr. Perkin so ably demonstrates, have been and are concurrent, inseparable one from the other in aspiration; filled with historic significance; flooded with the colors of Western romance; touched by the ups and downs of fate. The long recital by the teller of the tale is a most rewarding pleasure.

As one born in the Queen City of the Plains almost seventy years ago (how young we both were when we fell in love!) and as one who worked on the *News* early in this century, perhaps I may be forgiven when I take on the airs of an eyewitness to many of the events, and a crony of not a few persons portrayed in the pages of this book. As a professional writer I am amazed that *anyone* could manage the prodigious research; or put together the ragtag bits of almost lost traditions; sort out the facts; and make hitherto hidden or neglected data serve the demands of this authentic history—and *still* avoid the tedium which follows when most of the "documented" chronicles appear between boards. The non-scholar feels like taking leave of the whole work and mailing the author a get-well card.

Historian Perkin has told his story with skill; brightening it with rare anecdotes; and making his characters speak, live, and behave in true relation to their respective times. Not only has he blended the dual theme of Denver and its great newspaper, and with the insight of a virtuoso, but his contrapuntal notes also are superb.

Indeed, he has supplied us with sprightly excursions into the careers of several great editors, reporters, politicians, miners, pioneers, and other earth-shakers of the era. His story of the earliest Denver editor, William N. Byers, is the first comprehensive and informative appraisal of that man. Until now the Byers legend, told piecemeal up and down the

city-room and Press Club reaches for many years past, lacked a co-ordinator. Byers belatedly has found a Boswell.

The fabulous names are many in this book. They appear in good perspective, from the far-off Byers down to the dynamic Roy Howard, and to the present-day editor of the *News*, Jack Foster, one of America's brightest journalistic stars.

If the University of Colorado does not award Mr. Perkin a degree, and if Roy Howard does not give him a medal in recognition of this warm, vital, important tribute to a city and to its oldest newspaper, then I shall tear up my birth certificate. Whatever else happens, or does not happen, an ancient suitor thanks Bob Perkin for having written a love letter to two of that ex-Lochinvar's old sweethearts.

GENE FOWLER

PROLOGUE

Something of a Saga

THIS is the joint history of a city and a newspaper.

The city is Denver, and the newspaper is the *Rocky Mountain News*. The commingling of their biographies is no arch trick of historical sleight of hand. They were born together one hundred years ago, and the life they have shared every day since then has been a robust one.

Denver came into being as a side issue to the Pike's Peak or Bust! gold rush of 1859. It is now one of America's major cities. The transformation was not without the trying of souls.

The *Rocky Mountain News*, a journal of some little durability, has survived flood, fire, starvation, and mounted desperadoes with nervous trigger fingers. It has come through half a dozen wars, including the Indian. It has stood off plagues of grasshoppers and, narrowly, two gentlemen of exquisite rapacity named Bonfils and Tammen. Drouths, panics, and the Ku Klux Klan have done their worst. Repeal of the Sherman Silver Purchase Act left a deep wound, and the *News* also has lived out the boycotts of corporations, the ink-tipped lances of Eugene Field, and the hyperbole of flatterers.

Editors of the *Rocky Mountain News* have been kidnaped, shot at, caned, pistol-whipped, hanged in effigy, and immortalized in stained glass. They have chased redskins, built commonwealths, founded universities, climbed mountains, and been clouted from the rear while walking to work. On one day of scandalous memory an editor was the target of an unrequited mistress armed, naturally, with a pearl-handled pistol. In varied local catalogues the editors appear as pioneers, builders of city and state and star-guided Western empire, as public benefactors, history makers, grand gladiators, forces for the right, and champions of the people. The editor also has been typed as pinhead, Bub, Buster, wildcat, slinking dog, moral leper, cutthroat, low vagabond, and "the grandest liar and most infamous rascal out of hell alive."

An early contemporary summed it up. The *Colorado Iris* said in May of 1891:

The *Rocky Mountain News* was 32 years old last month. It is the oldest continuously published paper in this portion of the great West. . . . The wild Indians have held high carnival around its cabin and the coyotes have scratched its roof off. Rattlesnake Pete, Bronco Bill and other Western "terrors" have each in turn demanded "satisfaction," and generally went away with more than they wanted. It has been drowned, burned, scalped and boycotted and it is still there, the leading newspaper of the greatest country out of doors.

Rhetoric and circumstance have been hectic, but neither has prevailed. A generation or two ago this would have been attributed to something called grit, but that word now is long out of fashion and its alternative offends sensitive ears.

Only yesterday, as time runs for Denver and the *News*, there was gravel in the gold pan and painted savages lurking. Today Denver is a large city, growing larger at a dizzying pace, and the *News* is its oldest institution. A little older, in fact, than the city itself. The printing press preceded school, church, court, and permanent municipal government into the Pike's Peak wilderness. A newspaper was on the scene, a going proposition, when the news events began to happen, which is possibly the ideal "scoop" situation. It is also an occurrence without precedent in American journalism.

There are many centenarians among the daily newspapers of the United States. A compilation by the American Newspaper Publishers Association lists 277 of them. The nation's first newspaper, the *Boston News-Letter*, began its reporting in 1704 and stood for fifteen years as the only news press in America, but it has not survived. The Boston of the *News-Letter's* day was the colonial metropolis, with a population of 7000. Hartford, too, was an established colonial city of note with a proud New England culture more than a century old when the *Courant*, America's senior living newspaper, made its bow in 1764. New Yorkers in frock coats and fastidious mutton chops already were discussing earnestly in 1851 whether a wasteland of civic rubbish far uptown should be converted into a central park. In the midst of this debate on the high and advanced level of urban renewal, Henry Jarvis Raymond brought forth his *Times* by candlelight in a half-completed building for a population nearly as large as Denver's today. Both the *Times* and the *Courant* are pioneers and pillars of the American press, but their cities were built, ready and waiting for them when they appeared.

In the mountain West two notable newspapers predate the *Rocky Mountain News*. Salt Lake City's *Deseret News* began publication in 1850, and the Santa Fe *New Mexican* a year earlier. Again, these papers were created to serve the news hunger of communities already substantial and flourishing, even if far distant from centers of civilization back in "the States." In Utah, Brigham Young's buffeted church came first, and

then a press was established to advance the aspirations of the hardy, self-reliant Mormon way of life. In New Mexico, Santa Fe had been a colonial capital long before tea was dumped in Boston Harbor, and a news press actually was laggard in arriving, probably because a dominant church amply met the needs of the community for public instruction and guidance.

But Denver and the *News* started from scratch and hardscrabble together.

One year there was a waste of prairie and mountain, crisscrossed by the trails of Indians, fur traders, and explorers and passed by and through, leaped over, by the argonauts of the original gold rush to California. Flip the calendar, and there is a newspaper in business, informing, counseling, cajoling, bullying, and boosting a ragtag town in the midst of a brawling tidal wave of immigration which was being denounced by most of the country, and many of the participants, as a humbug.

It happened that fast.

An avaricious dream of overnight fortune was the touchstone. "By God, now my wife can be a lady!" That shout bounced out of a rocky gulch when one gold hunter struck it rich. The decency implicit in the cry assures him a place in the Colorado legend. But there would be no brownstone mansions for most of the pilgrims, no carriages or soirees with potted palm and violin, no mulberry moiré gowns or ladyhoods for their wives. A few made it; most didn't. And air castles were converted into a city and state by historical processes more laborious and mundane, including a newspaper's urgings of horny-handed agriculture on bonanza chasers too much in a hurry to wait upon the cyclic bounties of the seasons.

The *News* arrived in April of 1859, along with thousands of other immigrants. They found a gaggle of contentious settlements rough-built out of those materials which came most quickly to the hands of men more interested in panning for gold dust. Mostly the materials were cottonwood logs, mud, and prairie sod. The settlements were named Montana, Auraria, St. Charles, and, with almost comic civic patriotism, "Denver City."

Of these, Montana had come first. It had been laid out, off to the south, in September 1858, and ten or twelve cabins built for the winter. The settlers of Montana had crossed the plains on the strength of persistent rumors, dating back to 1852 and beyond, that there was gold to be had in the streams which drained the farthest high prairies at the foot of the Rockies.

Montana lasted less than a year. Its cabins were torn down and the building materials moved a few miles north to the spot where the proponents of Auraria, St. Charles, and Denver City had been noisily contending their rights to townsites in the late summer and fall of 1858. Auraria was established in August and named for a Georgia gold-mining

town. St. Charles was blocked out in September only to have its 640-acre claim jumped unceremoniously in November by the sponsors of Denver City, who named their hopeful village for the then governor of Kansas Territory, James William Denver.

Although the plurality of "towns" might imply otherwise, the area was not much congested in 1858. The towns and city were largely on paper or in the dreams of visionaries. The combined population of all four would not have exceeded a few score men and a half dozen women, and many of these journeyed back home for the winter. "Pike's Peak fever" had not yet become pandemic.

During the summer a few dollars' worth of elusive gold flakes had been sluiced or panned from the creeks of the vicinity, and some of the magic dust in goose or turkey quills—"Cherry Creek safes"—was carried back to the Missouri River towns which formed the westernmost fringe of civilization. The growing nation still lingered there, close to navigable waters it had come to understand and command, and hesitated to make the plunge out into the high, dry, lonely plains where Comanche and Pawnee roamed with scalp knife and yet more nameless terrors persisted out of travelers' tales a century old. Out there beyond Westport Landing, west of Leavenworth and Omaha and St. Joseph, lay the formidable Great American Desert of the explorers Pike and Long and all the school geographies. This was the wasteland the great and eloquent Daniel Webster had denounced from the floor of the United States Senate in 1838:

What do we want with this vast worthless area, this region of savages and wild beasts, of deserts, shifting sands and whirlwinds of dust, of cactus and prairie dogs? To what use could we ever hope to put these great deserts or those endless mountain ranges, impregnable and covered to their very base with eternal snow? What use have we for such a country?

Mr. President, I shall never vote one cent from the public treasury to place the Pacific Coast one inch nearer Boston than it is now.

Aside from a few adventurous souls of the sort to whom horizons always sing a siren song, most of the population of the Missouri River towns felt in 1858 about the way Webster had in 1838. Let the crazy mountain men with their dirty beards and greasy fringed jackets go out to the "Shining Mountains" if they wished. They seemed to have a passion for loneliness anyway. They could roam and hunt out there if they wanted to, and bring back the beaver skins and other furs. That was all there was out there: just beavers and grizzly bears, with a few sleepy Mexicans down on the southern border of nowhere. And between the steamboat landing and nowhere was nothing but dust and rattlesnakes and mean Indians. Maybe the critics were right in insisting President

Jefferson had been stung when he laid out fifteen million good American dollars for Louisiana. This damp black earth of the river valleys was fine for raising corn, but that was a big gap on the map between here and California, whence had come stories so wild and fabulous as hardly to be credited by any hardheaded, right-living man. The star of empire of Bishop Berkeley and John Quincy Adams was temporarily stalled in its westward course.

The panic of 1857, however, had spread gloom like a river-bottom fog up and down the Missouri. Everyone was hard up, and there was precious little market in town for the small surpluses of grain and produce the good black earth yielded. Money was tight, of a sudden debts were mountainous and crushing, and there were patches on homespun britches frugally dyed with the juice of the butternut. Young men, particularly, dreamed of a place to strike out anew.

Into this atmosphere came a few quills of gold dust from the far Pike's Peak country. The value of the dust was nominal, but no one was in much of a mood to quibble about quantity when quality was there plain to see. And the hopeful stories told by the sunburned Pike's Peakers were Midas-touched. Word spread up and down the river like prairie fire in a high wind, the story growing more wonderful, more detailed, and more inaccurate as each person or journal added just a mite from imagination to the retelling. In no time at all it came to be asserted and believed that Pike's Peak itself was absolutely and entirely pure, glorious, solid yellow gold, and the whole peak could be carried away, piece by piece, for the taking.

One account had it that the way to gather gold at Pike's Peak was to build oneself a framework of heavy timber, like a stone boat, a vehicle familiar to every industrious Missouri valley farmer. The bottom should be constructed of heavy rasps. One then hoisted this cumbersome device to the summit of the peak, embarked in it, and slid down the precipitous slopes as a child rides a bobsled down a pasture hill. The rasps on the bottom would scrape off the solid gold in great, heavy shavings and these would curl up and back into the machine. By the time the gold boat and its pilot reached the foot of the peak something approximating a ton of the metal would be on board. This, the story went, was "the common manner of gathering" gold in the Far West. It was obvious that one easily could become a millionaire, richer than Croesus, richer even than the town banker.

Or there was the "Wheelbarrow Man," who had a different formula for striking it rich. He swore that when he arrived in the Pike's Peak country he ran the wheel of his barrow into the waters of Cherry Creek. The waters were so auriferous that when he withdrew the wheel it had turned to gold by a wondrous process of conversion unknown to metallurgists then or since. Everything about the Pike's Peak country was "auriferous" in those days: creek, mountain and sky, language and

literature, intent and expectation. The region, in fact, was so drippingly gold-bearing that one was advised not to take pack mules along: the long-eared beasts would not be able to bring back loads as heavy as oxen could.

Fed on such tall tales and other reports scarcely milder, the Missouri Valley simmered and seethed and built up steam. Some of the border newspapers fanned the flames, cannily reasoning that if a full-fledged rush should be whipped up their towns would profit by the added commerce as jumping-off places for the diggings. Guidebooks were rushed into print to offer a dozen "best" routes to Pike's Peak and detailed inventories of what the well-supplied gold secker would take along as outfit.

One of these guides was prepared by a young Omaha man, William N. Byers, who soon would follow his own route west to become the founding editor of the *Rocky Mountain News*. Byers earlier had traveled the Oregon Trail and knew whereof he spoke. He suggested these items, among others, for a party of four planning six months of prospecting:

3 yoke of oxen, at \$75 per yoke.....	\$225.00
1 wagon (wooden or wrought iron axle).....	85.00
1 Tent and poles—the latter ironed.....	15.00
1 Dutch oven, for baking bread.....	1.25
1 wooden bucket.....	.25
4 steel picks, best quality, with handles.....	9.50
4 steel shovels, best quality, Ames' make.....	6.00
5 Gold pans, largest size.....	4.00
Sheet iron for Long Tom.....	.75
Pair of gold scales.....	1.00
3 gallons Brandy.....	12.00
Gunpowder, 8 pounds.....	3.20
Lead, 25 pounds.....	2.50
Shot, 10 pounds.....	1.00
2000 Gun Caps.....	1.20
10 yards drilling, for sluice.....	1.25

"Your ruffled shirts, standing collars and all kinds of fine clothing had better be left in your trunk, or wardrobe at home," Byers advised; "discard *all* cotton or linen clothing; adapt yourself at once to woolen and leather; provide yourself with woolen underclothes; woolen overshirts, thick and strong; woolen pants. . . . You may also leave your razor, for you won't use it. Pack all your baggage in a carpet or canvass sack; carry no trunks or boxes, if you can avoid it. . . ."

Byers was a temperate man throughout a life that extended into the present century. He probably thought a word of caution in order about all that brandy. "Brandy is intended for medicine," he lectured pro-

spective pilgrims, "rainy days and Fourth of July, and should always be used *very* sparingly."

He also counseled temperance in travel, that reins be put to haste in getting to Pike's Peak to pick up nuggets:

About twenty miles each day is as far as cattle should be driven. This will occupy about ten hours, the balance of the day they should have to feed, so that they may rest at night.

The day's travel should commence from six to seven o'clock A.M., continue five hours, rest two, again travel five hours, and camp for the night. Of course this rule cannot always be adhered to, but it should be so far as practicable. Don't travel Sundays. Your cattle need rest, and so do you.

And he had a final word of moral advice:

In conclusion, we would say to all who go to the mines, especially to the young, *Yield not to temptation*. Carry your principles with you; leave not your character at home, nor your Bible; you will need them both, and even *grace* from above, to protect you in a community whose god is Mammon, who are wild with excitement [sic], and free from family restraints.

The city of Mammon soon was to become Byers' own. Before the year was out he would be babying, boosting, and scolding it and jealously protecting it from all slanders. During the winter of 1858-59, however, the Cherry Creek diggings were not a settlement in terms of geography, but a myth, a great pot of gold just over the horizon, and the Missouri River border towns could scarcely contain themselves in their eagerness to send deputations out to partake of the riches. A few parties started that winter, and some of them made it through. But when spring came the frontier exploded, shooting out filaments of migration which carried thousands westward along trails black with men and animals and luminous with hope.

The *Rocky Mountain News* was born of this explosion which burst the barrier that had held the nation so long at the banks of the Missouri. As he had announced in his guide book, Byers himself took to the Platte River trail in March at the head of an outfit which included a printing press along with, presumably, the specified three gallons of brandy. By the end of April he had launched his newspaper—and had time for a little personal prospecting on the side.

Though he never stopped trying, Byers failed to find his own El Dorado of gold or silver, but he quickly became conscious that he and his *News* were making history. Out of rough materials, and in the midst of a half-mad tumult, a city was being fashioned at his doorstep. He and his paper pitched in to help.

It wasn't easy work. Most of the immigrants arrived in a euphoria of rosy optimism. This was not going to be rough pioneering but a jubilation, a get-rich-quick lark of an outing. Few came prepared, in psyche or pocketbook, for the rough business of mining or the equally stern task of mere survival five hundred long, slow miles from civilization. One fifty-niner later confessed he had set out from the Missouri with total fluid assets of twenty-five cents, and had squandered ten cents along the way.

The disillusionment was brutal. No gold sleds. Cherry Creek did not flow in a gold-lined channel. The Rockies were not, as advertised, lined, plated, or even uniformly veined with gold. A muttering, angry despondency mounted as each band of arrivals learned the worst. A few miners with experience gained in California or Georgia were making wages with their pans, Long Toms, and sluices, but no one was getting rich. Pike's Peak was a humbug, a cruel hoax. Thousands had come, and thousands headed back in a reverse migration of dejected and angry men vowing "Death & Vengeance!" on those who had lured them so far from home with golden promises.

The *News* helped stem the tide of "gobacks" with authoritative reports of actual and substantial strikes. It heaped editorial scorn on the fatuous and the foolhardy and never ceased to admonish all who would travel west to see the elephant that they should arrive well capitalized, prepared for work, and with their heads screwed on tight. Pike's Peak was no country, the *News* warned, for tenderfeet, greenhorns, tail-turners, and other "creatures who should never have been unloosed from their mothers' apron strings." Of these days of trial and gloom the press historian and bibliographer Douglas C. McMurtrie has written:

From the beginning, the *Rocky Mountain News* made itself felt as a commanding influence in the life and activities of the new settlements. It was ably and fearlessly edited, and more than ordinary care and effort was expended upon procuring accurate and reliable information about conditions in the mines. In fact, accuracy and truthfulness in its reports was the all-embracing policy of the paper. Nevertheless, such was the skepticism in the eastern states about everything connected with Colorado that the editor of the *News* was widely regarded by his eastern contemporaries as one of the most capable and dangerous liars in the country. . . .

It was a busy but disheartening summer for the *News* and its editor. Prospective subscribers were leaving the country in droves, but there was at least one cause for some rejoicing. The paper was winning its campaign for peace and unity between the rival villages of Auraria and Denver City, which had been glaring across Cherry Creek at each other like schoolboys.

Rivalries bristled, and civic pride was a point of jealous honor. Aurarians

and Denver Citians hotly contested each other's claims to population supremacy, to first painted house, first birth of a "white child" (Indians and half-breeds didn't count in the tabulation), first bank, first school—to the first of anything that was or seemed to be what a proper town ought to have. Any new enterprise persuaded to locate east or west of the creek became a prize—ammunition for a new salvo in the intercity wars. The *News* was a civic trophy of first order, since any town worthy the name had to have a newspaper. Auraria had the *News*, Denver City didn't, and nothing so rankled in the patriotic breasts of the Denver City fathers. There were blandishments and courtings. In October, Byers was offered twenty-four city lots if he would move his press a hundred yards or so northeast across the sandy bottoms of the dividing creek. In June town company officials had made a similar offer to Albert D. Richardson if he would establish a weekly "equal in size to the *Rocky Mountain News*" in their newsless town. Within a few years Richardson was to become the famous Civil War correspondent of the *New York Tribune*, noted for his feat of running the blockade at Vicksburg by floating down the river on a bale of hay. After the war Richardson wrote his *Beyond the Mississippi*, a classic of early Western travel, but in 1859 he was covering the Pike's Peak rush for the *Tribune* and the *Boston Journal*. For a time in 1859-60 he helped edit the lively little *Western Mountaineer* in Golden City, a dozen miles west of Cherry Creek in the foothills, and he was briefly a member of the *Rocky Mountain News* editorial staff in 1860.

Eventually Denver City got not one but several newspapers, and in good time the *News* picked up its types and moved across the creek, never to return to the "West Side." Civic jealousies cooled under the necessity of presenting a common front to late-arriving and irreverent detractors, and a movement for consolidation gained ground. Neither settlement was much by itself, it had to be candidly admitted, but perhaps putting the two together would make a presentable village to serve as capital of the new-won empire. By December the legislature of the provisional, and entirely illegal, territory of Jefferson was in a mood of conciliation sufficiently mellow to adopt an act providing for the consolidation of Auraria, Denver City, and Highland, which had been platted on the slopes across the river by a group of optimistic promoters including editor Byers.

An election was held December 19, a mayor chosen for the consolidated towns, and the present city of Denver dates from these beginnings: an illegal act by a legislature of no authority and an election of dubious validity. The tainted status of their united town apparently troubled the Denverites all winter. So a mass meeting was held in March to give the consolidation decision a second round of public approval. Then in the moonlit night of April 6, 1860, the populace met on the newly completed bridge across Cherry Creek at Larimer Street to "rejoice

over the marriage, and to listen to the inevitable speeches." The *News* reported the historic occasion from its new building a block downstream. In those days, everything happened within a stone's throw of the *News*.

The paper had reported on December 8: "A meeting of citizens was held at Jumps' Hall on Tuesday evening for the purpose of nominating candidates for the municipal offices, under the charter recently granted by the legislative assembly, to incorporate Denver, Auraria and Highland, under one municipal government. . . ." The following week the text of the consolidation act appeared on page one, and on December 21 the vote was in for the first municipal election of the consolidated city. John C. Moore had won handily in an election which had brought out, the *News* reported, a grand total of 690 voters, 342 of them in Denver, 348 in Auraria.

Denver had arrived as a going concern. Within a very short time she would be loudly demanding a place in the sun among American cities, devil take the hindmost and no holds barred. Her newspaper champion was ready to bet its boots or eat its hat that she was the finest baby, for her weight, in all the land. Bubbled the *News* on May 28, 1863:

We will wager an iron clad to a dugout that no city in the world less than four years old can boast as handsome women, as fast horses, as busy streets, as many churches, and as much genuine prosperity, as Denver. Who wants to bet?

So runs the background to the story of a frontier journal and a mile-high city on the eve of their joint centennial.

Denver today is a city of about 830,000 persons and growing so rapidly toward the million mark that all but her most confirmed boosters long since have abandoned the view that bigness is a civic virtue. The altitude is precisely 5280 feet at the sixteenth step of the granite flight leading up to the west portico of the Colorado statehouse, which imitates the national Capitol in architecture and has pure gold leaf from Colorado mines covering its dome.

The city sits, rather handsomely most visitors and all residents think, on a dozen gentle hills that slope down to the confluence of Cherry Creek and the South Platte River. Neither stream is navigable by any vessel of deeper draft than a canoe, although the *News* once sought to remedy this situation by sheer force of language. Early in its career the paper inaugurated with a straight face a shipping news department to report on dockings and sailings of river-borne traffic. The department soon was discontinued. Most of the scows and rafts which had been christened with pleasantly nautical names—possibly by the *News*—came to early grief on the sand bars of the Platte, since known as "the river that flows upside down." The *News* diverted its promotional in-

instincts to matters of artificial irrigation, a system to which Denver owes most of its beauty and Colorado much of its economic base.

Denver lies at the far western edge of the arid Great Plains. The upslope of the Rocky Mountains, where the water comes from, begins a few miles farther west. The Denver rainfall sustains a natural vegetation which browns off rapidly as dry summer days advance. So Denver has imported her own greenery. Except for a few hoary cottonwoods and evergreen conifers, the trees which make an oasis of the city are imports; they and the lawns are kept alive only by faithful and ritualistic irrigation. The garden hose and the lawn sprinkler deserve a place on the city seal along with mountain sky line and soaring eagle.

The jagged western sky line is, of course, the dominant landscape feature. The Rockies in their changing moods of sun and cloud form a rampart behind the Mile-High City. Snow fields of dazzling white high up along the Continental Divide are visible from Denver doorsteps around the year, and "the hills," as Denver calls them, are a constant in the city's ethos. The peak which looks directly down on Denver from the middle distance is Mount Evans (14,264 feet). Off to the south is Pike's Peak (14,110), which once lent its name to the whole region. To the north is Long's Peak (14,255), first climbed in 1868 by editor Byers of the *News*—a busy man—in company with the one-armed explorer of the Colorado River, Major John Wesley Powell. Between the extremes of Pike's and Long's peaks lies a panorama a hundred and ten miles in scope which is Denver's daily portion of natural grandeur.

Denver is the capital of her state, and she proclaims that, as the largest city, she is also the capital of an area extending from border to border and from Kansas City to—well, at least to Salt Lake (overlapping spheres of influence allowed for, naturally). The Chamber of Commerce is at some pains to keep alive the statistic that the Denver population is, and has been for a long time, greater than that of any city between the Missouri River and the Pacific coast, an area comprising about half the nation. This sort of bold geographical quartering once was part of the standard repertoire of any Denverite of decent civic pride, but of late long-timers who knew a quieter, less exuberant city with no one-way streets can be heard grouching, "Yes, and why don't they go back where they came from?"

The economic underpinning includes commerce, service industry, finance—Denver's Seventeenth Street likes to think of itself as "the West's Wall Street", a designation the *News* sometimes irreverently edits into "Scratch Lane"—agriculture, mining, and tourists. Other factors: federal employees, railroads, air travel, sugar beets, cattle and sheep and meat packing, oil exploration, refining and marketing, a spanking new guided missiles plant with its cluster of satellite industries, uranium, and a top-secret Atomic Energy Commission installation, skiing, light

industry, Fitzsimmons Army Hospital (on which the eyes of the world centered when a President suffered a heart attack), the Rocky Mountain Arsenal, Buckley Field Naval Air Station, and Lowry Air Force Base. At the turn of the century, when fresh air and climate cures for tuberculosis were in vogue, scores of sanitariums were built in Denver and filled with an army of health-seekers, some later to become prominent leaders in business and the professions. The TB germ accounts for the beginning of Denver's growth as a health and medical center.

This is also the town where the "damn Yankees" trained their young ballplayers, farmed out to the Denver Bears, and it's the city where a shavetail Ike wooed and won Mamie, the belle of Lafayette Street.

So much in the way of profile of the current setting.

The role of the *Rocky Mountain News* in all of this has been a lusty and sinewy one, and it doesn't fit the standard script. This can be no onward and upward tale of corporate enterprise vaulting sure-footedly to successively higher and higher pinnacles of achievement. Beloved as that sort of legend is in the folklore of American initiative, it won't do in this case. The *News* has picked itself up off the canvas too often, and too bloody, to be shaped into the image of all-conquering hero. For most of its years the *News* has been lean, hungry, and uncomplacent. It has enjoyed high moments of success, dominance, and triumph. It also has known defeat and despair. If there was a day when the city fondly named it "Old Reliable," there also was another day when there was not enough cash in the till to pay off the help and lock the doors. The story of the *News* illustrates with an uncommon clarity just how organic a newspaper can be. There's something human in its instinct to live, its will to persist and endure through natural catastrophe or economic prostration. The heart of the matter may lie in the close involvement of newspaper with community, an intimacy necessarily nearer than that of any other institution. A hot commerce of all things transient and timeless, grubby and exalted, runs in the columns of a newspaper, which is discarded daily as garbage wrapper yet lives a hundred years.

The *News* is more than just the oldest settler at the junction of Cherry Creek with the Platte. It has been committed. It helped create city and state, and found lost dogs. It published daily lessons when a coal strike closed down the schools, and it told of the legal and social difficulties of Gilda Gray, the "shimmy queen." It has offered counsel to the love-lorn and hounded municipal corruption from office. And the record starts at the very beginning. Perhaps no other newspaper in America has a history which so exactly parallels that of the community it lives with and serves.

The story of the *News* cannot be told in the notable headlines it has published. This will be no methodical analysis of how the *News* covered the assassination of Lincoln, Custer's last fight, the sinking of

the Maine, the betrayal of Woodrow Wilson, or the Normandy landings. These were events of great moment to all those who, like the *News*, lived through them, but the way the *News* handled their presentation to its readers was not substantially different from that of any other ably edited newspaper. Nor will this be a maudlin, righteous catalogue of acts of nobility, of crusades for the right and good with banners flying and the *News* armored as avenging knight with flaming sword. The *News* has crusaded on occasion, but so has every other newspaper worthy of its salt. These things are not *sui generis*. The *News* has its own personality, and the intent in these pages is to probe more intimately. The red-blooded and the antic will not be passed over here in order to elaborate the obvious.

President Franklin D. Roosevelt saluted the *News* on its eightieth birthday and commented, "What a rich mine of history the files of your paper must be with their continuous chronicle of the life of the community and the state through all the changes and chances of eighty years." The historian Hubert H. Bancroft set it down thus: "The *Rocky Mountain News* must ever constitute the corner-stone of Colorado History." And Jerome C. Smiley, author of the standard history of Denver, wrote of the history recorder as history maker: ". . . no other single agency did so much to hearten the people, to uphold the right and to lead the way through the many difficulties that beset the paths of those who founded Colorado and its queen city. . . . It was a valiant champion of the new country under oft discouraging conditions; and the defender of faith in the ultimate triumph that would come to those who were steadfast. It rose above the trials and disappointments of the day and pointed with what would now seem the gift of prophecy to that which the future held for the town and country."

The whole of the west-running time of a city, a state, and a region lies preserved in the columns of the *Rocky Mountain News*. A newspaper which has sold its individual copies for hay, shingles, cabbage, gold dust, and specie has become invaluable to the historian, and it is cited somewhere among the footnotes of any scholarly treatment of the Rocky Mountain West which presumes to go to original sources.

When it began its labors pioneering still was a matter of "a rifle, an axe, and a bag of corn." During its years a continent filled up and rounded out and a modern city rose from huts of logs and mud. The *Rocky Mountain News* can say—as Aeneas said to Dido—"All of which I saw, part of which I was."

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THE FIRST HUNDRED YEARS

CHAPTER ONE

Baptized in Snow Water

ALATE-SEASON SNOW, heavy and wet, fell on Auraria, Kansas Territory, throughout the day and into the night of April 22, 1859. Big puffs of clustered flakes drifted down on the mud roofs of cabins and on the conical tipis pitched among the trees along the river. It wasn't really cold: just chill, sodden, and dispiriting, were it not for the hints of laggard spring. The cottonwoods were beginning to leaf out, sticky green.

Auraria was not much of a town. Nothing to write home about, even if there had been a mail service. A raw little settlement far out in Indian country. An orphan huddle of cabins and nondescript shacks in the wilderness.

But it was a busy and noisy wilderness.

Thousands of men were on the move, going and coming. Draft oxen bawled their discomfort. Wagon wheels strained and creaked, and the long bull whips cracked. Over the whole turmoil a tumult of shouting, much of it profane.

Members of the Arapaho band, silent in damp blankets, stood beside their lodges to watch the wild traffic through the storm. Scouts from down the Platte reported many more white men headed up the trail. Here beside Cherry Creek they were everywhere underfoot, like dogs in a hunting camp. They jostled each other, seeking spots to put up tents or spread out bedrolls. They seemed to be able to talk only in shouts, except that they fell silent and moved their hands uneasily toward rifle, pistol, or belt knife when an Indian moved by. The wheels of their wagons had churned the sandy bottom of the creek into a quagmire, and sometimes a wagon would founder hub deep. The hoofs of their oxen, mules, and horses already had pounded the nearby prairie as bare of grass as a buffalo wallow. The animals themselves, lean and galled from forty days of hard travel and scant pasturage, were so trail-poor as to be scarcely worth stealing. The men were strange ones: tense, jumpy, loud, possessed by evil spirits which would not let them be still.

The white men were trespassing again, and their noisy coming frightened away the game. The soldiers had promised that this country where the Rookies rise from the high plains would remain forever a hunting preserve for the Arapahoes and Cheyennes. There had been a pipe and presents to seal the bargain, and the chiefs had pledged their braves to

good behavior. For the most part the pledge had been kept—if one didn't count a little honest thievery of casually guarded ponies. Yet now the country swarmed with white men who had come so swiftly and in such great numbers that protest was impossible. No one had time or inclination, obviously, to hold council on legal title to this muddy, churned-up land. The Sioux and Pawnees said it had happened like this before. Now it was happening again, and this time in a swooping flood of men and animals that darkened the prairie.

This was the Pike's Peak gold rush, last of the nation's abrupt westerings, and the objective was this crude place called Auraria, where, in all the town, there was only one building with glass windowpanes. In beyond the windows, one particular bunch of the newcomers was behaving more oddly than all the rest.

In the first place they had pitched their square tipi *inside* the house. They had lighted candles and lanterns because the day was snowy and dark. In the flickering light some of the strangers were making erratic, magical movements of their hands over flat boxes tipped up at an angle. Their fingers moved as rapidly as those of a squaw picking lice from a buffalo robe.

The building with the windows was "Uncle Dick's" saloon, and what was happening there was the birth of printing in the Rocky Mountains. As the damp evening passed, the first sheet of the *Rocky Mountain News* was peeled from the form of a Washington hand press.

In distant Manhattan the next morning, warm and well-fed New Yorkers stretched their legs expansively before glazed tile hearths and read in their elegantly refined *Ledger*:

THE FIRST MORNING HOUR

Nature tells us what it should be. Not ushered in with din and strife, and the trumpet-call to battle; but stealing softly, quietly, serenely over the senses, with song of birds and scent of myriad flowers. Just so should the spirit be in its waking hours, buoyant, hopeful, bright, soaring, rejoicing. . . . Oh mothers, fathers, guard your first waking thoughts! . . . Look to the first morning hours of each day, for, like the little stone which you idly throw into the lake, careless where it sinks, it leaves a ripple that shall widen till it reach the shore of eternity.¹

Out on the frontier, fevered and unserene Pike's Peakers, well beyond the scent of potted begonias, read in *their* ink-fresh newspaper:

CHEERING.

Mr. R. P. Smith, formerly of Plattsmouth, N. T., has just called at our office and shown us a package of Gold dust weighing a few cents

¹New York *Ledger*, April 23, 1859.

over forty two dollars. Mr. S. informs us that this is the result of three days labor by three men, working with the common rocker, and that in a new claim. This claim is on what is known as Dry Creek, three miles above its junction with the Platte, and eight miles west of Cherry Creek. . . .

This gold is all scale, or wash gold of the finest quality, perfectly clean and pure.

Other reports in similar vein had come in during the day before to "Uncle Dick" Wootton's store-saloon-meeting hall-printing office. They were rushed into type as fast as the thin light of a dark and stormy day would permit, and they became parts of the content of the new newspaper sputtering into being as a pinpoint of light in the wilderness.

A home for the newspaper, a partial shelter from inclement and inauspicious weather, had been provided by the doughty old frontiersman, Richens Lacy ("Uncle Dick") Wootton, a renowned mountain man who had known a wilder but more placid West for nearly two decades. It was an inadvertent providing. "Uncle Dick" really had been headed home to Kentucky. He never got there.

On my way, I intended to make one more trade with the Indians, and that was to wind-up my affairs in the Rocky Mountain region. [Wootton told Howard Louis Conard.] I loaded several wagons with goods, pocketed the drafts on St. Louis, in which the bulk of my fortune had been invested, and early in October, found myself again on the road, but with a different object in view from what I had had, when setting out on my former trips. . . . My first objective point was the upper Platte River, where I knew I should find the Arapahoe and Cheyenne Indians, and it was with them that I proposed to trade.

I followed what is now the line of the Santa Fe Railroad from Fort Union to Trinidad, and from there went due north by way of the Pueblo, to where Denver is now. There I came to a stop, and all my plans and I suppose the whole course of my after life was changed.

There wasn't much of Denver at that time, and I don't think anybody ever dreamed that any such city as we find there to-day would grow up inside of a hundred years. . . .²

Wootton found the first gold seekers beginning to settle at Cherry Creek, and they were eager for his New Mexican trading goods. He arrived on Christmas Eve of 1858, and a part of the cargo in the Wootton "train" consisted of several kegs of Taos lightnin', a virulent, corrosive 40-rod whiskey warranted to curl hair and cross eyes. "Uncle Dick" generously knocked in the heads of a couple kegs, hung out a tin cup, and invited all of his prospective customers to help themselves. The

²Howard Louis Conard, *"Uncle Dick" Wootton: The Pioneer Frontiersman of the Rocky Mountain Region* (Chicago, 1890), p. 372.

entire population gladly obliged, and Denver's first Christmas was merry with wild carouse and friendly skull-thumping disputation.

Such hearty celebrations were much to Wootton's robust taste. He decided to locate permanently. The town fathers of Auraria subsidized him with a hundred and sixty acres of land—which they didn't own—and "Uncle Dick" put up the settlement's first "business block" with hewn pine logs, a few whipsawed planks, a shake roof and—*mirabile dictu!*—the only glass windows within five hundred miles. The precious panes had been hauled to New Mexico on the Santa Fe Trail, and Wootton either brought them with him when he came or sent down to Santa Fe or Taos for them.

The Wootton "block" was not an imposing structure. Stark, bare, and plain, it stood one and a half stories in height on the flat Cherry Creek bottoms, southwest of the stream, at what became Fourth and Ferry streets when Auraria got around to platting and naming its thoroughfares. The present-day equivalent would be about 1413-15 Eleventh Street, in the heart of one of Denver's busy produce markets. Unfortunately no good picture of the Wootton building is available. An artist's conception in wood-block engraving appears in *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper* for August 20, 1859, and this drawing later was copied with slight changes in both Albert D. Richardson's *Beyond the Mississippi* (Hartford, 1867) and Jerome C. Smiley's *History of Denver* (Denver, 1901), and subsequently in many places. It is probably, however, that the *Leslie's* artist had not seen his subject and was working from descriptions; for he shows a two-story structure with several upper windows. The best contemporary accounts tell of a one-story building with a little slope-roofed attic lighted by a single four-pane window.³ It was in this dark and cramped attic that the first *News* was printed.

Downstairs, the Wootton building was somewhat more commodious. It measured 30 by 22 feet, and it served Auraria as saloon, trading post, and public auditorium. Wootton had rolled some of his kegs into line to form a counter, and across them he did business. He told Conard that he found it impossible to resist "the importunities of the pioneer settlers" that he open a store, but profits probably played a greater part than sentiment in the decision of the old trader. Measured by modern standards, the profits were handsome if not usurious.

"There was not much money in the town, or the camp, as we called it, but I got the most of what there was," Wootton candidly admitted, "and when the miners didn't have money, they generally had something to barter, and so we managed to keep business moving. . . .

"They would reach Denver 'broke,' and the first thing to do of course

³*Rocky Mountain News*, Jan. 18, 1860, and Feb. 1, 1860; Arthur E. Pierce, "The First Two Years," *The Trail*, June 1912; Jerome C. Smiley, *History of Denver* (Denver, 1901), p. 248, quoting William N. Byers; William N. Byers, "History of Colorado," in *Encyclopædia of Biography of Colorado* (Chicago, 1901), p. 39.

was to 'make a raise.' They nearly all came through with ox-teams, and they would come to me and leave a good yoke of cattle, as security for a loan of twenty-five dollars. On the day following they would bring back thirty dollars or forfeit the cattle. This was a matter of such frequent occurrence that loaning money in this way became a part of my business. . . ."⁴

Sale of the Taos tanglefoot from the counter kegs constituted, along with sharp moneylending practices, a major part of Wootton's custom, and his patrons were inclined to become boisterous and reckless with their weapons. Discussions were likely to be punctuated, for emphasis, with a pistol shot into the ceiling. Inasmuch as all men went armed, and it was often a long time between drinks with accompanying high-level debate, the Wootton ceiling frequently was peppered. This was scarcely conducive to serene slumbers, as recommended by the *New York Ledger*, for *Rocky Mountain News* staff members sleeping on the plank floor directly overhead. They solved the problem by hauling up an extra layer of protective planking, rearranging their blankets, and going back to sleep. Subsequently, when the *News* had vacated for a less hazardous location, the attic became a noted gambling room and the store downstairs was converted to the Young America saloon, a place described as "low."⁵

Earlier, the Wootton store, being the largest structure in the ragtag settlement, had been used as the site of public gatherings. Meetings of the members of the Auraria Town Company were held there, the first efforts at municipal government in the Cherry Creek diggings. It also was the scene of the first proposals for a state government. Presumably the multipurpose kegs served as speakers' rostrum for these sessions of citizens assembled.

Outside the building a rude stairway led to the upper loft. Effective space up under the eaves has been variously estimated. One account says it was 14 by 20 feet. Another reports 16 by 18 feet. In any event it was scarcely spacious, and it was called upon to serve as editor's sanctum, composing room, business office, kitchen, and sleeping apartment. On top of everything else, the roof leaked.

William N. Byers, the young editor who was to occupy these quarters with his pioneer press, arrived at Cherry Creek on horseback on April 17. He did a little prospecting up the South Platte and was shown some encouraging "colors" taken from the placers. One miner gave him twenty-two cents worth of dust washed out of a single pan of gravel. Then he discovered he was not alone in his ambition to found a gazette to serve the mines and miners of Cherry Creek. John L. Merrick had put in an appearance from St. Joseph, Missouri, four days earlier. Merrick had

⁴Conard, *op. cit.*, pp. 376-77.

⁵*Rocky Mountain News*, Feb. 1, 1860.

brought with him a shirttail full of types and a little "cap" size lever press which had once belonged to the harassed Mormons. The press had been tossed into the Missouri River at Independence in 1833 in one of the periodic outbursts of mob violence against the Saints, and years later it was fished out, cleaned up, and used in printing the *St. Joseph Gazette*.⁶ With this equipment and no capital, Merrick leisurely was preparing to issue the first number of the *Cherry Creek Pioneer*.

Once the rival publishers became aware of each other's presence and intent, a lively contest developed to see who would be first on the streets. The race aroused the intense interest of the population, and since this consisted, "Uncle Dick" computed, of about nine tenths gamblers, there was spirited wagering on the outcome. Merrick got busy with two helpers in his rented cabin on the northeast side of the creek at what would now be Sixteenth and Larimer streets. Byers dispatched a hurry-up message to his party, which had stopped at Fort St. Vrain to the north to prospect the Cache la Poudre River. Meanwhile Byers had become acquainted with Wootton, who offered use of the attic room as a printing office.

Word that the *Rocky Mountain News*, already named, was headed out from Omaha had preceded Byers into town, and the Byers & Company party had heard vaguely at Fort Kearney that another printer, who proved to be Merrick, was headed west. The rival settlements at Cherry Creek—Auraria and Denver City—were developing civic pretensions despite their appearance and youth, and the westward course of the presses was watched with anticipation. Soon they would have what any proper town should have: a newspaper. Maybe even two.

The wagons containing the *News* press and other equipment creaked into the settlements on the evening of April 20, but one of them, heavy-laden, got stuck in the soft, sandy bed of Cherry Creek in fording the stream to the Auraria side at present-day Blake Street. It was late night before it could be lightened and pulled loose. The weary printers, however, carried their cargo up the stairs to Wootton's attic, opened and tipped up the type cases, and assembled the press to be ready for business the following morning. On the twenty-first type clicked into composing sticks and a newspaper began to take shape.

Who the printers were on that first issue is not a matter of firm record. Byers was there, and Thomas Gibson of Fontanelle, Nebraska Territory, and John L. Dailey, an experienced printer who had worked for half a dozen frontier journals in Iowa and Nebraska. Byers was neither printer nor newspaperman; this was his maiden voyage at the rudder of a public press. Gibson was both, and he was one of the partners in Wm. N. Byers & Company. Dailey came out as printing foreman, and though he later picked up skills as a paragrapher and correspondent,

⁶Douglas C. McMurtrie and Albert H. Allen, *Early Printing in Colorado* (Denver, 1935), p. 19.

he remained for many years the hardheaded, practical member of the business. So the major task of supervising typesetting for the first edition of the *News* fell to Dailey and Gibson. Varied accounts of the founding also agree on a fourth man as being present. He was Charles S. Semper, a young printer who, the following year, was instrumental in organizing Colorado's first union, Denver Typographical Union No. 49, among his fellow typos on the *News* and the papers which followed it. Others who have been listed as being connected with the *News* at its founding include Copeland Rabe, Irwin Sansom, P. W. Case, Jack Smith, L. A. and W. J. Curtice, James and Harry Creighton, W. W. Whipple, H. E. Turner, "Pap" Hoyt, Henry Gibson, and Robert L., Edward Charles, Will and Jack Sumner, Byers' brothers-in-law.

Editorial chores for the first issue were accomplished, it is assumed, by editor Byers, probably with the assistance of Thomas Gibson. But it is by no means certain that all of the articles and editorials then and later which have been freely attributed to the editor actually were written by him. Manuscript material in Byers' handwriting indicates that to the day of his death in the following century his literary style remained undistinguished and his grammar and spelling eccentric. Byers was a self-educated man and, though his output was prolific, he at no time regarded himself as a writer. Presumably John Dailey and his fellow printers—as members of their craft sometimes do—undertook considerable editing of the editor as they stood at their cases.

It is probable that Byers did most of the reporting for the first issue. If so, the editor's pen charged merrily along on April 21 and 22 as the *News* raced the *Pioneer* to press. Not much "leg work" outside the office was required, however. Byers remembered later that all the local news in the first issue was brought into the office by interested volunteer reporters anxious to be helpful.

The snowstorm hit on the night of the twenty-first and continued intermittently throughout the twenty-second. The task of the printers in hand-setting Brevier and Nonpareil type must have been a difficult one by the light of candles and whatever illumination a leaden, snow-filled sky permitted to enter through the single window. Moreover, as the heavy snow piled up on the shakes overhead, the roof began to leak. The icy melt dripped down in streams into the cases, over the press, and on the paper stocks under tarpaulins. When the time came to begin the presswork it was necessary to rig up a tent over the press so that the sheets would not be spoiled before they could be printed. The *News* was born to a baptism of snow water.

The attic editorial room, small enough to begin with, grew crowded with spectators, well-wishers, and betters as the race grew hotter on the twenty-second. The population "vibrated" between the offices of the *News* and the *Pioneer* to observe progress and protect their bets with body English and moral support. What with the storm, it wasn't a good

day for gold hunting anyway, and a steady stream of citizens sloshed back and forth across the creek between Merrick in Denver City and Byers in Auraria, watching with relish Denver's first newspaper "war."

Long after night had fallen the slow, meticulous handwork at the cases went on. At last the forms were locked up. Byers gave a moment of glory to one of the onlookers, little O. P. ("Old Scout") Wiggins, mountain man, hunter, trapper, who never before had seen a printing press. He had hung around all day bugeyed with fascination. Byers let Wiggins run the ink roller over the type forms fixed in the bed of the press. Wiggins lived a long time, but he never forgot the rare honor and privilege he had been accorded. It remained in his memory as bright as his friendship with Kit Carson, his days as guide to the "Great Pathfinder," John Charles Frémont, on the 1842 and 1843 expeditions to the Rockies, or his experiences as a forty-niner in California. Later "Old Scout" twice would seek to show his gratitude for being tapped as a printer's devil. He would name a town on the eastern Colorado plains for Byers, and he would thrust Scripture aside to make room for paper supplies for the *News*. During Civil War days Wiggins was given command of a detachment of fifty Omaha and Winnebago Indians and detailed to escort stages and wagon trains as protection against hostile tribes on the prairie. Wiggins and his Indians had their headquarters at Alkali, fifty miles southeast of Julesburg, so that they might scout both the Platte River and the Smoky Hill trails for the war-thinned cavalry. On one occasion Wiggins discovered a stagecoach was departing with a heavy load of Mormon Bibles consigned to Salt Lake City. A stock of sorely needed paper for the *News* in Denver was being left behind. These were trying times for an isolated journal. Wagon trains weren't getting through regularly, and the *News* was printing on any paper it could find, wall, wrapping, or tissue. "Old Scout" was aware of the situation. He threw out the Mormon Bibles, crammed the coach with paper for the *News*, and sped it on its way.⁷

In the Wootton attic on Friday night, April 22, 1859, the beaming little frontiersman worked happily with his ink roller for more than an hour. About 10 P.M. the outside sheets had been printed and the newly set inside pages were put on the press. Jack Smith, a "huge Negro," bent his two-hundred-pound bulk to the lever, and Byers emerged from the indoor tent with the first complete issue of the *Rocky Mountain News* in his hands. It was dated Saturday, April 23. Twenty minutes later by the watches of a dozen unofficial timekeepers, Jack Merrick handed out the first number of his *Cherry Creek Pioneer*, also dated April 23. He had lost the race. The first issue of the *Pioneer* would be its last.

Jack Merrick either was a good loser or he wanted to hunt gold more

⁷*Rocky Mountain News*, Apr. 23, 1897; Eugene Parsons, " 'Old Scout' Wiggins," *The Trail*, Dec. 1910, pp. 5ff.

than he wanted to be a journalist. Next day he traded off the entire *Pioneer* outfit for twenty-five dollars in flour and bacon and headed for the hills to find an auriferous fortune.⁸ Gibson of the *News* "gathered the *Pioneer* establishment into his arms" and carried it across the creek to Auraria.⁹ It consisted of a "bee gum" full of types and a little press capable of printing a 7- by 10-inch paper one page at a time. Merrick never did hit his strike as a gold miner, though he tried, and he would drop down from the mountains from time to time to work as a printer for the *News* until he accumulated a grubstake for a new try.

Relations apparently remained amicable both during the "war" and after. Because Merrick had been on the ground first, though he had lost the publishing race by twenty minutes, Byers later would salute him as a "jolly, wide-awake printer" and the "real pioneer" of Colorado journalism:

At the first alarm of war, he hurried to the States and enlisted in one of the earliest volunteer regiments organized in Illinois. He served his term with credit and gained promotion. When mustered out he returned to his former home, Leavenworth, Kansas, and secured a commission in a Kansas veteran regiment. About the close of the war he was provost marshal in Leavenworth, where, whilst in the active discharge of his duty, he was killed in a street riot. Poor Jack, he was one of the most generous, big-hearted men that ever lived, and the real pioneer of our craft in Colorado.¹⁰

Actually it hadn't been an entirely fair-and-square contest. Merrick's *Pioneer* was smaller—three columns wide against the *News*' six—but he was working with two assistants against probably a half dozen experienced men in the Wootton loft. Moreover, the *News* cold-decked him. The entire two outside pages of the paper had been set in type before the expedition ever left Omaha. The type had been brought across the plains locked in the form and ready to print. All that remained was to gather, write, and set enough news and advertisements to fill up the two inner pages.

The striking contrast in content between the inside and the outside pages often has puzzled persons who have examined one of the rare surviving copies of the first *News*. The disparity is readily understandable when one considers that part of the paper was prepared nearly two months earlier in Omaha and the balance rushed together in two days at Auraria, five hundred miles away. It sometimes has been recorded by

⁸William N. Byers, ms., Bancroft Library Pac Ms.L6, n.d. [1884].

⁹William N. Byers, "Early Journalism in Colorado," *Magazine of Western History*, April 1889, p. 692.

¹⁰*Idem*.

reputable historians that half the first *News* actually was printed in Omaha before the Byers & Company two-wagon train left for the Rockies. An examination of what a bibliographer would call internal evidence shows this to be impossible. The date April 23, 1859, appears in the masthead on page one, which otherwise had been put together at Omaha. Considering the hazards and uncertainties of plains travel in the midst of a gold rush, Byers could not have been certain what day he would issue his prospective journal, and it would have been rash beyond credibility to have dated it that far in advance. Nor was he exactly sure *where* he would publish, except that it would be somewhere in the Pike's Peak gold regions of the Rocky Mountains. Yet the page-one masthead also carries the dateline "Cherry Creek, K.T.," in an obvious bid for neutrality amid the inter-settlement rivalries of Auraria and Denver City. Merrick was committed; his *Pioneer* boldly declared its location in Denver City. The masthead of the first *News* also stipulates that it was being published for "The Mines and Miners of Kansas and Nebraska." At this time the 40th parallel was the dividing line between Kansas and Nebraska territories, both of which extended far west of present state boundaries. The 40th parallel cuts through Colorado just a few miles north of Denver, and Byers, a surveyor by trade, must have known that he might locate either north or south of the line. His several reminiscences of the founding show clearly that he did not know precisely where he was going and that he planned to pick whatever location seemed most auspicious. Under other circumstances the *Rocky Mountain News* might have been published in Golden City or Boulder City, both struggling into existence at this time, or at the old fur-trade post of Fort St. Vrain or at Arapahoe, a ghost town several miles west of Denver of which nothing now remains but a historical marker.

The manuscript diary of John L. Dailey for 1859 shows that he was at work in Omaha from February 28 through March 4 "fixing up the material for the 'Rocky Mountain News'. . ."¹¹ At another point Dailey states specifically: "We had the first half of the first edition of The News in type and locked in the forms when we arrived. We prepared the first half of the sheet in Omaha before we left. . ."¹² It must be assumed, then, that the form for the outer sheet of the first *News* was unlocked after the expedition found haven in Auraria, the dateline inserted, and the first and fourth pages run off while the subsequent form for the second and third pages was being prepared.

The press which accomplished this historic printing was a used Washington hand press, and it already had something of a pedigree in pioneering. It was an "Imperial," six-column folio in size, capable of printing two six-column pages 13¾ by 19 inches at one impression. To obtain an

¹¹These diaries are in the Western History Collection, Denver Public Library.

¹²Undated clipping. Dailey scrapbook, Denver Public Library.

imprint, the form of type, lying flat in the hip-high bed, was inked with a hand roller and a sheet of paper laid upon it. The bed of the press then was cranked by hand into position under the platen and the latter levered down to make the imprint. Then the process was reversed to remove the printed sheet and begin another. A slow and laborious process by modern standards, yet a practical, efficient one which turned out good printing. In fact this same model of the Washington press sometimes still is used today for ultra-fine, damp-paper hand printing.

The Washington which printed the *News* was obtained by Byers from Bellevue, Nebraska Territory, where it was "the relict of a starved-to-death newspaper." The Missouri River town of Bellevue, half a dozen miles south of Omaha, was then larger than Omaha and viewed itself as a candidate for the territorial capital. Today Bellevue is a pleasant little suburban town of 6000 inhabitants and lies well within the shadow of Nebraska's first city. In early 1859 it long had been important as fur-trade post and outfitting point for plains travel and expeditions of exploration.¹³

Although Bellevue was a frontier village of fur-trade fame and an antiquity stretching back to 1810, it had let two newspapers starve to death in the four years prior to 1859, when Byers began shopping for a press to print his prospective *Rocky Mountain News*. It is probable that the first press to print a newspaper in Nebraska also printed the first one in Colorado.

The *Nebraska Palladium and Platte Valley Advocate*, first paper printed in the Cornhusker state, began publication in Bellevue on November 15, 1854, with H. (or D.) E. Reed as editor and Thomas Morton, Dan Carpenter, and A. D. Long as printers. It managed to collect 500 subscribers but died with the issue of April 11, 1855. The press, however, remained in Bellevue, possibly in the hands of the settlement's leading merchant, as security for bills covering provisions which had sustained the editor and his printers in their struggle with bankruptcy.

Using this same press, the *Bellevue Gazette* now made its hopeful bow on October 23, 1856, under the editorship of R. S. McEwen, but it too was short-lived.¹⁴ The *Nebraska Advertiser* (Brownville) noted in its October 14, 1858, issue that the *Gazette* had suspended publication and gone over to the Great Majority. This was about the time William N. Byers was coming down with an attack of printer's ink in nearby Omaha.

Early in 1859 a Bellevue missionary, Rev. C. Chaucer Goss, published

¹³James C. Olson, *History of Nebraska* (Lincoln, 1955), pp. 50-51.

¹⁴*Proceedings and Collections of the Nebraska State Historical Society*, Second series, Vol. V (Lincoln, 1902), pp. 15-16; J. Sterling Morton and others, *Illustrated History of Nebraska* (Lincoln, 1906), Vol. II, pp. 368-69; A. T. Andreas, pub., *History of the State of Nebraska* (Chicago, 1882), pp. 1366-67.

a pamphlet history of the settlement, and he mentions that the *Gazette* was "a company affair."¹⁵ One of the leading members of the Bellevue Town Company, organized in 1854, was a hard-bitten little man, Peter A. Sarpy, whose exploits and adventures crowd through the chronicles of the fur-trade era in the American West. A noted and inveterate frontiersman and horizon-chaser, Sarpy had been factor for the American Fur Company when the settlement was young, and he was one of the leading promoters of Bellevue, the town, as distinguished from Bellevue, his old trading post. He also was the town's leading merchant and owned the ferry to St. Mary on the Iowa side of the river. It can be supposed that any bankrupt newspaper in his precinct well might have deposited its tangible assets with him in payment of debts, and the supposition has some confirmation in the record.

In a letter to the Nebraska State Historical Society from Salt Lake City dated December 31, 1897, Hadley D. Johnson mentions the Bellevue presses.¹⁶ Johnson had been elected territorial printer for the second session of the Nebraska Territory legislature in 1855-56. He wrote that the political plum which fell to his lot found him with no outfit to accomplish his duties in the "art preservative," as printing was designated (mostly by printers) in those days. So he "purchased from Col. Peter A. Sarpy, the Indian trader at Bellevue, the press and other material upon which the *Palladium* and the *Gazette* had been printed."

In the Beatrice, Nebraska, *Express* for May 14, 1874, appears a further note about the *Gazette* by a reporter who apparently had firsthand knowledge of the situation:

The *Gazette*, Bellevue, was first issued October 23, 1856; Strickland (Silas A.) Burt & Co.—L. L. Bowen, P. A. Sarpy, Fenner Ferguson [Ferguson] and J. T. Allen [Allan] the company. Henry M. Burt afterwards became the sole proprietor. Mr. B. is now editor and publisher of the New England Homestead and Sunday Telegraph, Springfield, Mass., and visited Nebraska the past summer. The *Gazette* was continued until September, 1859 [obviously an error of a year], and then sold to Wm. V. Byers and J. L. Daily [Dailey], and by them taken by ox-teams to Denver, Col., and there published as the Rocky Mountain News, the first paper in Colorado, and yet published by Mr. Byers.

Parenthetically and digressively I state that the movement of Mr. Byers at the time of purchasing the Bellevue *Gazette* was a "forestaller" by which the writer with the Nebraska Advertiser office "did not go" to Denver, arrangements having been made to that effect, and abandoned because of the "claim" being "jumped."

¹⁵C. Chaucer Goss, *Bellevue, Larimer & Saint Mary: Their History, Location, Description and Advantages* (Bellevue, 1859); reprint edition (Bank of Bellevue, 1957), p. 11.

¹⁶*Proceedings and Collections, etc.*, pp. 51-52.

The Hadley Johnson letter goes on to say that he hauled the Bellevue press and type to Omaha to carry out his legislative printing and also to publish the *Nebraska Democrat*. Subsequently, he says, the press was sold to S. M. Owens and taken to Florence—now a part of Omaha but then a separate village, also contending for the Nebraska capital—and used to print the *Courier* there for a short time. Johnson continues: "The plant, I think, was removed elsewhere and some other newspaper born, to bloom for a day and then to die,—'unwept, unhonored, and unsung.'" The record of the movements of this active little hand press is by no means conclusive, but if Johnson intended to refer to the *Rocky Mountain News* his lamentations were premature.

If the *Palladium* press was indeed the *News* press, as seems highly likely, its frontier adventures were not completed when the labors were done on the night of April 22, 1859, in Auraria. The old "Imperial" remained a part of *News* equipment for more than five years, and a caprice of nature was its final undoing. Along with all the rest of the *News* chattel and plant, the press was swept away in Denver's memorable Cherry Creek flood of May 19, 1864. Years later, in 1899, excavators uncovered pieces of the press, its lever and some types, in the Cherry Creek sands far downstream. Portions were given as keepsakes to Byers and Dailey, and the balance of the relics went into custody of the Colorado State Historical Society for preservation in the State Museum. Hadley Johnson had suggested to the Nebraska Historical Society that it hunt up the old press as a museum piece; his suggestion was carried out, all unknowing, in another state.

But the old Washington was not yet an exhibit on the snowy April night in '59. It was a working press, and it was taking up the task of observing a nation's westward march. The Pike's Peak gold rush now had a recorder. History could get on with its processes.

The first completed copy of the *News* which Byers brought out from under the protective tent was retained by him. Later he would print on the margin of page one:

This is the first sheet ever printed in the Pike
Country, at 10 P.M., April 22d, 1859.

Wm. N. Byers

At the top of the second page he printed the legend: "Second page of first paper ever printed in what is now the Territory of Colorado, April 22, 1859, at 10 o'clock, P.M." This officially attested copy now is a part of the Western History Collection of the Denver Public Library.

Having established his claim to being "first," Byers completed only two or three copies of the paper that night to pass around among the

jostling well-wishers in the attic.¹⁷ One of these copies was presented to Arthur E. Pierce, who lived to become the last of the pioneers who were "among those present."¹⁸ Pierce was a close friend of Dailey's and became proprietor of Denver's first book, magazine, and "news depot," headquarters for daily gatherings of the press gang.

The following day, April 23, the balance of the first edition was struck off, some 500 to 800 copies by varying accounts. Dailey noted in his diary that the *News* "goes like hot cakes" at twenty-five cents a copy, in coin or gold dust. The amount of dust a seller could pinch from a buyer's buckskin pouch between thumb and forefinger passed for twenty-five cents. No allowance made for ham-handed dust pinchers. Byers also had brought along a pair of gold scales and, presumably, the small square of Brussels carpet which every alert Pike's Peak merchant kept on his counter beneath his scales. Any gold flakes dropped during weighing of a payment fell into the nap of the carpet, and at the end of the day's business the carpet was shaken out to add accidentals to receipts.

A preliminary effort has been made to locate surviving copies of the scarce, gold-bought Volume 1, Number 1, of the *News*. Nine only can be definitely placed. One hangs framed on the wall of the office of Jack Foster, present editor of the *News*. Another is preserved in the journalism room of Denver's Byers Junior High School, named for the founder and occupying the site of the home in which he died. Copies are owned privately by Ted Morris and Nolie Mumey of Denver. The *Union List of Newspapers* locates copies—which have been confirmed—in the Denver Public Library; Western Americana Collection, Yale University Library (two copies); Colorado State Historical Society, Denver; and Norlin Library, University of Colorado, Boulder; and a facsimile in the Library of Congress. Facsimiles also are held by the Nebraska State Historical Society, Lincoln, and the New York State Library, Albany. Unconfirmed reports have located copies in the ownership of John Evans of Denver, the Shaw family of Grand Junction, Colorado, and J. D. Bayard of Honolulu. In 1919 a copy was reported (*The Trail*, Vol. XI, No. 11, p. 12) in the possession of Senator Scott of West Virginia. Experts in the field of rare ephemera estimate the value of a copy at upwards of five hundred dollars. Another piece of Rocky Mountain incunabula, if a copy ever were found and authenticated, might be equally interesting to collectors and scholars of the history of American printing.

Printing in the shadow of the Rockies did not begin with that first complete copy of the *News* which Byers so carefully designated for posterity, but with a lowly lost-and-found handbill. So far as is known, Jack Merrick printed nothing on his press until he published the *Pioneer*. But Byers, in an address to a meeting of Colorado pioneers in 1899, told of a job his press turned out ahead of the *News*:

¹⁷*Rocky Mountain News*, Feb. 1, 1860.

¹⁸*Ibid.*, Apr. 23, 1921.

. . . Before the first issue of the paper was made a little dodger was struck off for a man who had lost a horse and a dog. This was the first printing done in this territory.¹⁹

Douglas C. McMurtrie, the authority on early printing in Colorado, made an unsuccessful effort to trace down this dodger and reported: "No copy of it is known to exist, nor is it known for whom it was printed."²⁰ Undoubtedly it was a minor effort, and certainly evanescent, but it can be hoped that it was effective and that the man got his horse and dog back. He needed the horse badly in the Pike's Peak country of 1859, and his concern for his dog seems to suggest that he deserves a kind thought a century later.

The *News* proved somewhat less transitory than this first fruit of its press, and over the years it has found many lost dogs. One of the fondest traditions of Denver journalism—which has a host of eccentricities less savory—is that the columns of its newspapers always have been open to appeals—free of charge—for the return of strayed or stolen dogs. In one of the recent gridiron shows of the Denver Newspaper Guild a city-room scene opened with a reporter on the telephone. "Okay, lady," the resigned newsman said. "What's the dog's name?" The scarcely hilarious allusion brought an instant, knowing laugh from the audience and indicates how deeply the lost-dog tradition is entrenched in the *mores* of the city and its press. Of late, however, the practice of dog watching seems to be withering in the hot blast of big-city ways, and there are those who mourn its passing.

Some have said that the tradition had its start in the uncharacteristic affection for dogs of the late Frederick G. Bonfils, famous publisher of the *Denver Post* and a man of such steely power of will as to have evoked few warm and tender sentiments in Denver breasts. Unfortunately this pleasant version of the custom's origin does not square with historical fact. Lost-dog stories in Denver have a pedigree much more antique. The *News* was printing them regularly and ritually before Bonfils was born. The lineage of dog journalism runs, clear and true, straight back to an ephemeral handbill which, somehow, got published amid the rush of setting up news about the "physical certainty that gold in lump must be found in the mountain from whence these sands are washed" and the demanding business of seducing the muse:

Hurrah for the land where the moor and the mountain
Are sparkling with treasures no language hath told,
Where the wave of the river and the spray of the fountain
Are bright with the glitter of genuine gold.

¹⁹Smiley, *op. cit.*, pp. 248-49; Wilbur Fisk Stone, *History of Colorado* (Chicago, 1918), p. 782.

²⁰McMurtrie and Allen, *op. cit.*, p. 24fn.

Both the poesy and the prophetic declaration of greater things to come from the mountains are from the pages of the first issue of the *News*. The inside pages. The outer, Omaha-composed pages, were both less ebullient and less timely. Nearly a full column of page one was given over to a borrowed report from the *American Messenger* on the opening of Japan, an item of intelligence which was then about three years old. "Cape Horn to Be Avoided," the front page of the *News* informed any landlocked mariners who might be interested, and "Crime in New York City and Vicinity" regrettably had reached a level of 60,865 arrests in a single year, 30,065 of them involving persons of Irish persuasion.

Dr. A. F. Peck, who will be met again later in this story, advertised on the cover page that as a physician and surgeon he had established offices at Cache-a-la-Poudre, Nebraska Territory, "where he may at all times be found when not professionally engaged or digging gold." The Cache la Poudre River flows into the South Platte about fifty miles northeast of Denver, and it was the first likely-looking stream the gold rushers hit.

Wm. N. Byers & Co., editors, publishers, and proprietors, announced on the front page that they would accept subscriptions at five dollars per annum in advance, that they were prepared to do job printing of all kinds, and that you could have a full column of advertising space in the *News* every week for a year at a cost of a hundred and fifty dollars. Your business card, assuming a business, would be published (five lines or less) for twelve dollars a year.

The rest of page one, with a notable exception, was composed of news which bore almost no relation to conditions or events indigenous to Cherry Creek and environs. There was speculation about what the world would be like without a Sabbath—in a country which had no churches. A Yankee's visit to the great Carlyle was commented upon, and the *New York Tribune* was quoted as warning against feeding cattle on sugar cane—in a land where it sometimes snows in June. A moral preachment concerning the use of tobacco (in England) filled the bottom of one column, and at the foot of another was a two-line riddle of the sort much beloved by compositors in the day, not too far past, when "fillers" often were employed in newspapers. "What key is that that opens the gate of misery? Whis-key." Shortly before World War II another such space killer rendered *News* readers similarly nauseous for several months. The filler was a scientific note and ran to the effect that the emu lays four eggs and plucks down from her breast to make the nest. It began appearing frequently and regularly. Denver became the best-informed city in the world on the nesting habits and parturition of the emu. The managing editor's unsuccessful efforts to locate and dispose of the offending bit of type drove him frantic. It seemed to be immune to mandatory kills sent down from the editorial room upstairs. Finally it was discovered that one of the make-up men was carrying the two lines around in the pocket of his printer's apron and using them whenever a column came up short.

For weeks he had been thriftily retrieving the filler when the pages were broken down each day in order that he might be instantly equipped for two-line emergencies at press time.

The one exception to the reign of whis-keys and statistics on shoe consumption on page one of the first *News* was an item which cast a long shadow ahead. It appeared under the headline "Farming vs. Gold Digging."

From present appearance, our citizens are likely to all be taken off with the Cherry Creek Yellow Fever, inasmuch that the farming interest of our Territory is likely to suffer materially, and the miners will also have to suffer for want of supplies.

This is all wrong; and our opinion is that farmers who stay at home, and spend as much money to improve and cultivate their farms, will realize more clear profit by so doing, than they will to go to the mines.

There will be enough to go to dig all the gold the Union will need, and those who raise stock and produce for miners will get their equal share of the gold in exchange for their produce. . . .

This was the *News*' first brief in a long-continued pleading that agriculture not be neglected. Again, the young but bearded Byers was speaking in the voice of a prophet. For although gold and silver were to provide a foundation for Colorado's early growth, the dominance of mining would be relatively short-lived. The wealth of the mines would produce cloud cities and millionaires like Tabor, Stratton, McLean, and Penrose, but it also would yield ghost towns and shattered hopes. In pursuit of the magic metals men soon would string a network of narrow-gauge railroad lines over, under, and around the Colorado peaks in fantastic feats of dauntless engineering. Yet these would pass and become mere souvenirs of an era. Within a few decades the Colorado mines were to give up wealth far in excess of that which the California forty-niners found, but great as the riches were in millions and billions they would not approach the secure return won by tilling the good earth. In the twentieth century mining still is a major industry in the wide, far spaces the *Rocky Mountain News* serves, and the nation finds it advantageous to maintain its major coinage mint in Denver. The firm growth came, however, from grass and grain and the annual increase nature works by casting sunlight on the factories of a green leaf.

It came from cattle and wheat and sugar beets, fruits from the orchard, timber from the hills, alfalfa hay and sheep, potatoes and melons and the tender produce of intensively cultivated bottomland gardens to which water was brought at some cost in sweat and dollars. Novice editor Byers at twenty-eight, son of two generations of frontier farmers, caught a glimpse of what was to come, and he lent himself and his newspaper, from the beginning, to every movement aimed at the development of

Colorado agriculture. He himself planted some of the first ears of experimental wheat. He was the godfather of Colorado's huge sugar-beet industry. On his own farm, now well within the city limits, he set out the first fruit trees and grapevines. His alert reportorial eye, encompassing everything about this new country, did not fail to note that trail-thin oxen, turned out to die during the first winter, unaccountably showed up again in the spring fatter than ever. Even the dry, brown prairie grass of winter was nutritious. Byers planted trees and dug ditches. He experimented with nut culture (a failure) and with watermelons (a success), and he became a founder of the first agricultural society, the first forestry association. And he used his *News* to foster all his schemes and visions for a land of plenty in the "Great American Desert."

Considering the tenor of the times in '59 and the perfervid mood of the newly arrived population, it is not strange that the early pleadings of the *News* for the hoe and plow as against the rocker and Long Tom should have fallen on ears made deaf by siren songs. Most of the arrivals had come from farms in Nebraska, Kansas, Iowa, and Missouri, and they knew *that* life and its calluses all too well. In fact they had come here precisely to escape the drudgery of following the plow. They would, instead, pick up nuggets the size of hen's eggs. Not many of them were thinking in terms of agriculture, though a few were. Rufus Clark was one fifty-niner who saw from the start that there were more ways of getting gold than scrabbling among the rocks with a sluice. He earned himself a fortune and a lifetime nickname by raising potatoes in soil more easily worked than gravel or granite. One of his smaller crops sold for thirty thousand dollars, and "Potato" Clark wound up a philanthropist with forty-five hundred pieces of property occupying twelve consecutive pages in the county assessor's books.

Byers demonstrated his own belief in the future of agriculture by many activities, but he also was an experienced real estate promoter. He had been involved in one or more of the "paper city" promotions which sprang up in eastern Nebraska Territory during the flush of optimism which followed the Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854. As a surveyor, he was half of the land and law firm of Poppleton & Byers in Omaha. On the possibility that the Pike's Peak country might not yet be ready for enlightenment, he had prudently retained his real estate office in the Missouri River town when he struck out west with his press. So he hedged a little at the end of his first apotheosis of agriculture:

. . . Those who wish to get real estate will never be able to purchase it as cheap, nor on as good terms again, as the gold mines has [sic] turned the heads of all those who have bought property in the [Nebraska] Territory, and all they think of is to dig gold and wash gold.

It is our candid opinion that those who have a few dollars to spare, will make more by buying property in eastern Nebraska at present, while the excitement is so high, than they will to go to the mines.

He didn't quite say that the firm of Poppleton & Byers was "at your service," but he came as close to it as he probably felt he dared.

Nor was Byers immune to his own "Cherry Creek Yellow Fever," and the inside pages of his first newspaper sang of gold. He personally raced to the scene of each new discovery in the mountains, and he staked claims at all of them. Throughout his active life he pursued the golden will-o'-the-wisp on countless excursions which took him into every gulch and cañon across the breadth and depth of the state, and he was the personification of the eternal sucker for boom-and-bust mining investments. He held claims or interests in mines in nearly every gold- or silver-bearing district of the Rockies. He explored, prospected, and invested, and he was never so busy at the editorial desk that he couldn't take off on a moment's notice when word of some new strike trickled in. The chores of weekly, and then daily, newspapering apparently were detailed to faithful John Dailey or to other partners or subordinates. It was not Byers' lot ever to hit it rich, and though no good record exists among his surviving accounts it is highly probable that his fliers in mining were in part responsible for the many years he spent flirting with bankruptcy or in high-interest hock to moneylenders.

Page two of the first *News* drips gold from every pore. There are reports of success from O. P. Goodwin at Boulder City, B. F. Langley on St. Vrain's Fork, W. M. Slaughter on Dry Creek. An article headed "Mining Intelligence" says:

It is not to be expected that the "Rocky Mountain News" will contain much mining or local information in the first number, published as it is within 3 days of our arrival. No reliable particulars could be gathered in a few days, we have seen the region, however, and have seen many of the men engaged here; some of them are old California miners; some of them are fresh from the nearest settlements; some have wintered here in order to be on the spot at the first opening of the season; others have travelled through the mud and frost of early spring, and the united testimony of all who have investigated for themselves is that gold exists, in greater or less quantities, over a large tract of country, extending from Cherry creek on the south to far above Ft. Laramie on the north. Many concur in saying that most of these deposits are richer than similar ones in California, and that there is not a reasonable doubt but that as soon as the gulches of the mountains can be explored, lump and quartz gold will be found in large quantities. It would seem to be a geological impossibility that gold in scale could be widely diffused as this is, all along the rivers running from the mountains, and not find the source of this supply.

If we credit individual stories we could relate marvels equal to the Arabian Nights for wealth. One has heard of great deposits on the head waters of the Missouri and Yellowstone; another has understood the secret signs of the mountain Indian, explaining the secret of the treasure.

But from the mass of marvel we can glean this truth. Gold, in scale, exists in sufficient quantity to reward the working miner, over a large surface of the plain on the eastern slope of the mountain, and in the sands of nearly all the rivers yet prospected, and which rise in the Rocky mountains. Where this state of things exists in a country upheaved by volcanic eruptions, it is almost a physical certainty that gold in lump must be found in the mountain from whence these sands are washed. By next week we hope to make a beginning at least for precise information.

And so, in the main, would events prove out. The lode and vein gold was found a few weeks later, and it *was* in the mountains whence washed the sands.

In a day when reckless optimism alternated with deepest despair the early *News* succeeded rather admirably in keeping its head. The prospectus, appearing on page three of the first number, stated: "We hope by conducting the paper honestly and fairly, to obtain for it a wide circulation in all the Eastern states, as well as at the Mines, and by carefully see[k]ing correct information, render our statements perfectly reliable." Later writers, seeking to weigh the influence of the early *News*, have concluded that the paper lived up remarkably to its promises, that it promoted without fanning wildfires, that it was "ably and fearlessly edited, and more than ordinary care and effort was expended upon procuring accurate and reliable information about conditions in the mines. In fact accuracy and truthfulness in its reports was the all-embracing policy of the paper. . . ." ²¹

The first *News* declared on page three:

Our aim is to locate permanently at a point which will be nearly central to the whole mining region and at the same time most accessible to the great eastern cities. By this we hope to obtain the eastern news as speedily as possible for the miners and collect information from all the prominent mines for the east. We will have reliable correspondents in different mining regions, and will not knowingly admit any correspondence unless we are satisfied of its truth. We cannot however undertake to vouch for correspondents, but no statements will be made editorially in regard to the mines or any other matter in this region unless we know it to be true. Politically, this paper will be independent; there is neither time or place for those discussions which interest older and organized communities. The local matters of the mining regions will be abundantly sufficient, and we

²¹Ibid., p. 34.

think, by a straight forward truthful course, and a steady devotion to the interest of the Rocky Mountain settlement to receive and deserve a general support, and respect for the "Rocky Mountain News."

"Yes," the new journal announced, "NEWS from the Rocky Mountains, NEWS from the Desert Plain!" There were new eras fermenting in at least a few brains, and new empires definitely were in prospect if not clearly in purpose.

. . . The hum of busy men is heard in the mountains so lately rising lonely in majestic silence; the cheerful tones of a multitude fill the air that but lately echoed only the occasional voice of a weary wanderer; the Buffalo and Deer that but yesterday scarcely feared the form of man, are already driven by the presence of men, from the boundless plains where they had roamed almost undisturbed for a thousand years; the wandering savages, often an object of fear to the pilgrim travellers, are themselves, in the twinkling of an eye, trembling before the coming wave of a countless emigration. The poor Indian, heretofore quietly displaced by treaty, is now pushed rudely on by the resistless rush of Yankee enterprise; and ere the year shall close, the Indians of Kansas and Nebraska will have closed by a leap, almost the last space between them and their mournful destiny. Men are rapidly gathering together, towns are built, cities are in embryo formation, and all the paraphernalia of busy life are seen and heard 500 miles west of last years outposts of civilization. The Missouri River is no longer the "farther west" to the ambitious emigrant but leaping at a bound over 500 miles of solitude, the emigrant now settles at the base of the Rocky Mountains, and here, even in mid winter, has formed the nucleus of a future State. Spring has scarcely dissipated the dangers of winter travel, and yet thousands are here, many thousands on their way, and even now men ask with avidity for "News" from the Mountain Mines. If the richness and extent of the Gold Regions realize their present promise, a new State will be organized west of Kansas and Nebraska ere this year is closed, with a hundred thousand inhabitants. . . .

The *News* continued with a frank statement of the reasons behind its founding;

The proprietors of this paper have, until within a month past, lived at Omaha, within 500 miles of the Gold Regions, and have had abundant opportunity of judging the truth or falsity of the testimony daily presented in regard to the Gold Mines. We think there is more evidence of a reliable character of the richness and extent of these mines, and obtained under far more unfavorable circumstances, than was offered from California. The geological structure is the same as the gold regions of California, and men, who are familiar with mining in California, have examined these mines west of Kansas and Nebraska,

as far as the season would admit, and pronounce these of greater promise than any heretofore known. The testimony is absolute as to the gold, though it is not absolute as to the extent and richness of the deposit. We know enough, however, to believe that a large population will settle here at once, and prosper, and we believe that this will be a reading and intelligent population. Believing this we have at great trouble brought a printing press and all necessary fixtures over 500 miles, at an inclement season, and over roads freezing at night and thawing by day. We have done this because we wished to collect and send forth reliable information, because we wished to help mould and organize the new population, and because we thought it would pay. . . .

Page two gives an apologetic explanation for the lack of timely news "from the States." There was no telegraph, of course, and no mail service except irregularly and by courtesy of travelers from Fort Laramie on the Overland Trail two hundred and twenty miles to the north.

. . . Owing to the fact that our exchanges and eastern letters are all addressed to Fort Laramie—the nearest post office—and we have had no opportunity of getting them since our arrival, we are unable to give our readers any news whatever from the States this week; but we hope before our next issue to have full files, when we will give a faithful digest of the news of the world.

On the following page the *News* goes on to complain further that of mail "We have none, but we hope soon to hear the postman's horn and see Uncle Sam's letter bags. Certainly we should have some kind of postal favors. Five thousand people have each left friends in 'America,' from whom they wish to hear occasionally, and who wish to hear from them and the gold mines. Give us post offices and mails, and we will patronize the institution as much [as] any community of the same number in the United States."

In such an isolated situation it obviously was a part of prudence and foresight to establish and maintain good relations with the postmaster at Fort Laramie.

Fort Laramie P.O.—We are gratified to hear the ecomiurns [sic] bestowed upon the Post Master of the above office for the many favors he has shown to the citizens of the mining regions for some months past. May we always be as well served.

Page three also carries a bit of apology about the paper's appearance, although an effort had been made to dress up the inside with two illustrations. One is a rudely carved woodcut which shows a Pike's Peaker striding off toward the mines in hussar's boots and smoking a long clay churchwarden pipe. Over his shoulder is slung a pick and a musket.

The second illustration is the same map of the gold regions which had appeared earlier that year in Byers' guidebook for prospective pilgrims.

But the inside pages of the first *News* bear full testimony to haste and difficulty of preparation. Typographical errors are numerous. Italic characters appear at random in words otherwise Roman in style. Letters are inverted and omitted. Words have been skipped over by the compositors, and John Dailey and Charlie Semper apparently exhausted their supply of periods and lower-case *k*'s. So they used commas for periods and for the *k*'s ran in other letters upside down, leaving the divided "feet" of the types to print in vertical pairs of smudgy blocks.

OUR APPEARANCE THIS WEEK is not all we hope and expect to make it. Our readers will bear in mind that we have not been three days upon the ground—that we are setting up and arranging a new office in a new country, remote from many of the conveniences of civilization, and therefore overlook the shortcomings of this our first issue. When once our office is arranged, and everything has found its proper place, we hope to present as fair a sheet as is often seen in older lands.

The initial *News* carries word that the first wagonload of sawmill lumber had arrived in town and the first murderer been executed. The boards came in from the Cherry Creek pineries, courtesy of Messrs. Cooper and Wyatt; but the *News* neglected to obtain, or at least to give, the name of the murderer.

MURDER AND EXECUTION—On the 7th inst. four Germans—an old man, two sons and a son-in-law—set out from their camp on Vasquez's fork [Vasquez Fork, now Clear Creek] to look for cattle. But one—the son-in-law—returned. After returning he acted so strangely as to arouse suspicion that all was not right, and he was arrested, when he confessed that he murdered his brother-in-law. A search was instituted, and the body of the murdered man found, shot through the head. The murderer was put upon his trial, before Judge Smith found guilty on his own confession, and forthwith executed by hanging to a tree.

The killer was John Stoefel,²² and the details of his taking off are supplied by "Uncle Dick" Wootton, to whom he sold a buckskin bag of gold dust taken from his victim:

. . . three men got into a two horse wagon, and were driven under a cottonwood tree on the bank of Cherry Creek. These three men were the prisoner, the executioner, and a minister, who had found his way out from the east along with the great crowd of gold seekers.

A rope was placed around the murderer's neck and thrown over a limb of the tree. Then the minister, a good Christian man, kneeled

²²Smiley, op. cit., p. 339.

down in the wagon to offer up a prayer, and the executioner also got down on his knees. The fellow who was to be hanged didn't follow their example, but stood up, until the executioner poked him in the ribs, and asked him if he didn't know better than to act like a heathen.

After prayer the wagon was driven out from under the tree, and the man who had murdered his friend to get possession of a few dollars worth of gold dust was left dangling from the Cottonwood limb until he was pronounced dead and cut down. It was as neat and orderly an execution as ever took place anywhere, and was the first of a series which revolutionized Denver society. . . .²³

The "society" of Auraria-Denver, to which the *Rocky Mountain News* now had come as the first ornament of civilization and culture, stood badly in need of revolutionizing in the spring of 1859, by Wootton's testimony. And the old trapper and Indian trader could scarcely have held other than liberal views on behavior. He was used to men with the bark on. Nonetheless, he pronounced a large part of the first Denver population "utterly lawless." Murders, he said, were "almost everyday occurrences" and "stealing was the only occupation" of a considerable section of the populace. The thieves "seemed to steal for the love of it, and would take anything from a pet calf or a counterfeit gold dollar, up to a saw mill." Wootton asserted it for "actual fact" that the first steam sawmill set up in Denver had been stolen from a boat on the river at St. Joseph and spirited across the plains in a ponderous getaway at ox-team speed.

Other observers of the Cherry Creek settlements in 1859 confirm, in essence if not degree, Wootton's estimate that about nine out of ten residents were gamblers. "Gaming was universal," Albert D. Richardson wrote, and he paused to listen to the pitch of a three-card monte dealer in the luxurious Denver House (canvas roof, dirt floor):

"Here you are, gentlemen; this ace of hearts is the winning card. Watch it closely. Follow it with your eye as I shuffle. Here it is, and now here, now here and now," (laying the three on the table with faces down)—"where? If you point it out the first time you win; but if you miss you lose. Here it is you see," (turning it up;) "now watch it again," (shuffling.) "This ace of hearts gentlemen is the winning card. I take no bets from paupers, cripples or orphan children. The ace of hearts. It is my regular trade, gentlemen—to move my hands quicker than your eyes. I always have two chances to your one. The ace of hearts. If your sight is quick enough, you beat me and I pay; if not, I beat you and take your money. The ace of hearts; who will go me twenty?"²⁴

²³Conard, op. cit., pp. 380–81.

²⁴Albert D. Richardson, *Beyond the Mississippi* (Hartford, 1867), p. 187.

The Denver House, Richardson observed, was "always crowded with swarthy men armed and in rough costumes." The bar retailed "enormous quantities of cigars and liquors" and at half a dozen gaming tables gamblers were busy day and night. "I saw the probate judge of the county lose thirty Denver lots in less than ten minutes, at cards, in this public saloon on Sunday morning; and afterward observed the county sheriff pawning his revolver for twenty dollars to spend in betting at faro."

Other elements of the sporting world also made their appearance early in the village. In a recently discovered, unpublished letter a Pike's Peaker who signed himself "Pink S.," wrote to his sweetheart back in Cherry Fork, Adams County, Ohio, on February 26, 1859, and gave an inventory of the town's physical progress:

The Emigration is coming in continually, and our town is building almost like a 2d sanfrancisco. . . . it all ready contains . . . one theater, one oppera or ball room, any amt. of Liquor and gambling saloons and one or two H Hs or *assignation houses* [the emphasis is Pink's] are to be supplied from Mexico and Saint louis & Cincin. . . .²⁵

Although Denver still had no school, church, court or government, and almost no homes, the brides of the multitude already were congregating to provide their professional solace to lonely men with gold dust in their pokes.

A. K. McClure, Pennsylvania newspaperman, made a tour of the West a few years later and reported his findings in letters to the *New York Tribune* and *Franklin Repository* of Chambersburg, Pennsylvania, which subsequently were gathered into a book. McClure also gave a low opinion of Denver yeomanry: ". . . nine tenths of those who came at first were either fugitives or adventurers. In one mingled mass came the honest bankrupt, the fugitive from justice, the gambler and the loafer."²⁶

This was not so, insists Jerome Smiley, ever the patriotic historian and booster. In a way everyone at Cherry Creek in '59 was an adventurer, he concedes, "but to assert or imply that as a whole the mass was composed of bankrupts, criminals, gamblers, and loafers, is stupid, ignorant nonsense, formulated from the stories it was once common to relate of many places in the west."²⁷ He goes on:

. . . There were gamblers and other criminals a-plenty; but as to loafers, this country was probably the most uninviting region in the

²⁵Pink S. to Miss Maggie S. Kirk, ms. letter, collection of Mose Iacino, Denver; photostatic copy courtesy Daniel A. Stone, Denver.

²⁶A. K. McClure, *Three Thousand Miles through the Rocky Mountains* (Philadelphia, 1869), p. 124.

²⁷Smiley, op. cit., p. 242.

world for them. The truth is that while many had been bankrupted, and many others impoverished by the collapse in 1857, in the main the men who came here in the pioneer times were of average honesty, and of more than average enthusiasm and heedlessness. They were inspired by no worse motive than one to better their worldly condition, and to do it in one or two summer seasons. . . .

The appearance of the Pike's Peakers, Smiley continues, lent some credence to reports of criminality and bloodthirsty barbarity. They were, he says, "hideously hairy and unkempt, sun-browned, recklessly ragged, some of them bare-footed, and all dust-covered and begrimed. The addition of goggles, worn to protect their eyes from the glare of the prairie sun, gave to many a mild-mannered and peaceful man a dangerous and, to some individuals, a ferocious, aspect."

A picture of Denver and her people at the height of the influx of such strange travelers is further filled out by the observant Richardson, who found the settlement a "most forlorn and desolate-looking metropolis." He arrived on the morning of June 6, in company with the famous Horace Greeley of the *Tribune*, aboard one of the first stagecoaches to reach Cherry Creek.

. . . If my memory is faithful, there were five women in the whole gold region; and the appearance of a bonnet in the street was the signal for the entire population to rush to the cabin doors and gaze upon its wearer as at any other natural curiosity. The men who gathered about our coach on its arrival were attired in slouched hats, tattered woolen shirts, buckskin pantaloons and moccasins; and had knives and revolvers suspended from their belts. . . .

Denver society was a strange medley. There were Americans from every quarter of the Union, Mexicans, Indians, half-breeds, trappers, speculators, gamblers, desperadoes, broken-down politicians and honest men. Almost every day was enlivened by its little shooting match. While the great gaming saloon [the Denver House] was crowded with people, drunken ruffians sometimes fired five or six shots from their revolvers, frightening everybody pell-mell out of the room, but seldom wounding any one. One day I heard the bar-keeper politely ask a man lying upon a bench to remove. The recumbent replied to the request with his revolver. Indeed firing at this bar-tender was a common amusement among the guests. At first he bore it laughingly, but one day a shot grazed his ear, whereupon, remarking that there was such a thing as carrying a joke too far and that *this* was "about played out," he buckled on two revolvers and swore he would kill the next man who took aim at him. He was not troubled afterward. . . .

. . . Denver and Auraria, (now West Denver,) contained about one thousand people, with three hundred buildings, nearly all of hewn pine logs. One third were unfinished and roofless, having been erected the previous winter for speculative purposes. There were very few glass

windows or doors and but two or three board floors. The nearest saw-mill was forty miles away, and the occupants of the cabins lived upon the native earth, hard, smooth and clean-swept. One lady, by sewing together corn-sacks for a carpet and covering her log walls with sheets and table cloths, gave to her mansion an appearance of rare luxury. Chairs were glories yet to come. Stools, tables and pole-bedsteads were the staple furniture, while rough boxes did duty as bureaus and cupboards. Hearths and fire-places were of adobe, as in Utah, California and Mexico. Chimneys were of sticks of wood piled up like children's cob-houses and plastered with mud. A few roofs were covered with shingles split by hand, but most were of logs spread with prairie grass and covered with earth. . . .

Between my cabin and the Denver House were a dozen Indian lodges, enlivened by squaws dressing the skins of wild animals or cooking puppies for dinner. . . .²⁸

Into this scene the inquiring, observing, admonishing press now thrust itself. When William N. Byers rode his horse down over the hill where the Colorado Capitol now stands, he looked down, perhaps with some misgivings, on a busy but unpromising settlement of a few straggling tents and rude log huts. Oxen bawled or slept stoically in the middle of the roadway, still yoked to covered wagons whose owners were off somewhere inquiring the way to the gold of other men who were asking the same question. A pall of dust churned up by the hoofs of mules and horses hung like smoke in the bottomlands. A long line of vehicles—prairie schooners, buckboards, open wagons, handcarts, even wheelbarrows—waited in line at the ferry on the far side of Cherry Creek for transportation across the spring-swollen Platte. A village of Arapaho tipis was scattered among the cottonwoods, then just coming into new leaf.

On April 17 the rush was at its peak. Or just past it. A day or so earlier a reverse migration of angry, disappointed men, their visions dashed, had begun. The gobacks spread wrathful tales of the Pike's Peak humbug along the line of incoming pilgrims. The line, stretching unbroken to the horizon, slowed and wavered. Many turned and headed home. Many kept coming in one of the major tides of American migration.

During the previous December there had been perhaps two or three hundred men and four or five women wintering through at Cherry Creek. Now in April new arrivals numbered a hundred or more every day. An election for officials of Arapahoe County, Kansas Territory, had been held March 28. In Auraria, 231 votes were cast, and over in Denver City, 144. But the indicated population of something over 375 persons was swollen by many hundreds of newcomers who had little interest in the tenuous affairs of a county government irregular to the point of myth. By late spring, it was estimated, Denver had a highly

²⁸Richardson, *op. cit.*, pp. 177-78, 186.

fluid population of 1000 or more, and other thousands had passed on through to the mountains.

"When I arrived here there was a camp of perhaps 1000 or 1200 people," Byers told the historian Hubert Bancroft in 1884.²⁹ Some were living in tents, some in cabins. Most of them were on the Auraria side of the creek, and Denver City could count perhaps a dozen completed cabins. Byers estimated 150,000 persons were on the plains that year bound for Pike's Peak. Of these, perhaps a third turned back as the cry of hoax passed eastward along the trails. "I think over 100,000 of them reached here," Byers said, "and about 35,000 remained at the end of the season. . . . Things were very lively on the route."

The young editor had camped with Indians at Henderson's Island, twelve miles out, on the night of April 16, and he rode into Cherry Creek settlement about eleven next morning. The first thing he saw, he recalled later, was a cabin with a white canvas roof "where City Hall now stands."³⁰ (Today the City Hall Byers spoke of has come and gone. The site is now a parking lot, with only the big bell from the tower, preserved on a monument, to mark the former seat of municipal government on the shore of Cherry Creek at Fourteenth and Larimer streets.) Otherwise, Denver was largely a shanty town of log huts roofed with slabs of prairie sod, grass side down. Byers' *News* would make considerable point of it as a milestone in civic progress when the first paint was used in town the following December.

To this unpainted and unprepossessing community his *Rocky Mountain News* hopefully—and perhaps a touch unrealistically—addressed the prospectus on page three of its maiden issue. The *k*'s now have been restored to remedy the shortage experienced by compositors Dailey and Semper a hundred years ago.

PROSPECTUS of the ROCKY MOUNTAIN NEWS

The *News* is the first journal established in the Gold mining region of Kansas and Nebraska, at the east foot and under the very shadow of the great Rocky Mountains chain, in the center of what will ere many months be a great community [k]noc[k]ing at the door of the Union for admission as a sovereign State,

The character of this important region will depend much upon the influence brought to bear upon its early settlement, and no influence is as powerful to dissuade from disorder, or assist to organize with dignity and order as a Free Press.

The editorial department will be conducted with entire independence

²⁹Byers, Bancroft ms.

³⁰*Rocky Mountain News*, Apr. 23, 1897.

of all partizens or pecuniary considerations; and while free from all undue sectional influence, will be devoted thoroughly to western interests and especially the central west, Reliable correspondents will be secured in every important Mining Region and information collected with care, as to their extent and richness, and also their Agricultural and commercial resources. Special attention will be paid to ascertaining the result of reliable surveys for roads through the mountains and particularly for the Main Central Trac[k] of a Pacific Rail Road, In a word, all that will be useful to the stranger in forming a correct estimate of the Mining Region and its prospects: either for Mining, Farming or Trading, will be faithfully communicated in the ROCKY MOUNTAIN NEWS,

At the same time private arrangements will be made until the Mail or Express is regularly established, to obtain the earliest Eastern News for the Miners, We hope by conducting the paper honestly and fairly, to obtain for it a wide circulation in all the Eastern States, as well as at the Mines, and by carefully see[k]ing correct information, render our statements perfectly reliable, Wholesale dealers wishing to deal with the mining region will find it to their interest to advertise in the MOUNTAIN NEWS as being the first newspaper established it will be read by all the Miners.

Being the first it is the intention to ma[k]e the NEWS the best Newspaper in the country, It is printed upon an Imperial press, with new type and furnished with a most complete Office in all its appointments, the first establishment of the [k]ind ever set up within the borders of the great plains west of the Missouri River, The news will publish no mining reports, or rich discoveries upon mere rumor, but only upon the best authenticated accounts of [k]nown correspondents, or the personal [k]nowledge of the Proprietors, so that its reports may be fully relied upon.

For Terms, see first page,

W, N, BYERS & CO,

Other of the hopes and aspirations of a fledgling editor and his newborn journal are set forth in the traditional "salutatory" at the head of the editorial column on the opposite page.

With our hat in our hand and our best bow we this week make our first appearance upon the stage in the capacity of Editor.

We make our debut in the far west, where the snowy mountains look down upon us in the hottest summer day as well as in the winters cold; here where a few months ago the wild beasts and wilder Indians held undisturbed possession—where now surges the advancing wave of Anglo Saxon enterprise and civilization, where soon we fondly hope will be erected a great and powerful state, another empire in the sisterhood of empires.

Our course is marked out; we will adhere to it with steadfast and

fixed determination, to speak, write and publish the truth and nothing but the truth, let it work us weal or woe.

Fondly looking forward to a long and pleasant acquaintance with our readers, hoping well to act our part, we send forth to the world the first number of the *Rocky Mountain News*.

CHAPTER TWO

West to the Rockies

THE expedition which toiled across the plains to found the *Rocky Mountain News* was financed, in part, by three hundred dollars found on the cadaver of a horse thief. Some of the other parties on the trail were less generously capitalized.

The dollars were acquired in the pursuit of his professional duties, or education, by Dr. A. F. Peck, who has been met earlier in the pages of this narrative as the medic who confidently advertised in the first *News* that he would alternate his time between surgery and digging gold on the Cache la Poudre. The ad was one of those which had been collected and set into type before Byers & Company struck out from Omaha. There the good doctor had acquired some measure of distinction for his height and had won the nickname of "Long" Dr. Peck. Shortly before the press party left Omaha he had been engaged in dissecting the body of a man lynched for horse stealing and had made his first—perhaps his only—lucky strike in the deceased's pockets, a small bonanza which must have caused some self-castigation among the righteous vigilantes for not ascertaining more carefully their victim's assets.

Although he was not a part of the *News* enterprise itself, Dr. Peck was signed on as a fully participating member of the expedition and served, at least on one occasion, as its chaplain. It may be assumed that some of the windfall three hundred dollars went into the outfitting of the two wagons with flour, bacon, coffee, dried apples, saleratus, and other necessities, including brandy and gold pans.

An effort has been made, with indifferent success, to document the case of the wealthy horse thief and his unintended contribution to the founding of the *News*. The story has its basis in a *post hoc* report some thirteen years late, plus a little substantiation by coincidence. The *News* of December 31, 1873, told of Dr. Peck's membership in the party and went on to quote (without a date) from "Dr. Miller's 'Home Gossip'" column in the *Omaha Herald*:

. . . The doctor had just become wealthy by finding \$300 on the person of a gentleman who swung off into eternity for horse stealing here at about that time, whose body he had been engaged in dissecting.

\$300 was a large amount of money in those days of impecuniosity

and is said to have added considerably to the fearful natural length of the lofty doctor. . . .

There would seem to have been little occasion for an autopsy on a strung-up horse thief, even if Nebraska Territorial justice had advanced at that date to the point of holding inquests, which it hadn't. So apparently Dr. Peck had seized upon macabre opportunity for the perfection of his anatomical and surgical knowledge by an exercise in dissection. This was a day when cadavers were hard come by, and the good doctor probably would have considered himself fortunate even if the horse fancier had not been carrying a bankroll.

Dr. Peck is something of an elusive figure. The Nebraska State Historical Society made a preliminary try at locating him in early Omaha records but nothing was found. He cannot have had much success finding gold in the Cache la Poudre, since he was in Denver practicing medicine early in the fall of 1859. A local item in the *News* for October 13 describes the paper's companion-of-the-trail as "a graduate of one of the best New York medical colleges" and says he "also attended medical lectures in New Orleans, and served with distinction as a Surgeon in Gen. Walker's Nicaraguan army." Aside from this, little more is known about the background and attainments of the lanky, far-wandering medic who helped pioneer his profession in Colorado under somewhat unusual circumstances. The *News* of October 27 reports that he was one of the seconds to R. E. Whitsitt in a duel—Navy Colts at ten paces—with William Park McClure, the "Little Thunderer," on October 19. McClure was hit in the groin but recovered. Whitsitt, one of the most prominent of Denver's early settlers, escaped injury and had no need for the ministrations of his professional second. Dr. Peck's name appears among the eight physicians and surgeons listed in the city's first directory,¹ but he was gone by the time D. O. Wilhelm compiled the second directory in 1866.

It is not difficult to establish a probable identity for the horse thief who contributed toward Dr. Peck's excursion to the gold regions. The case was a celebrated one in the early annals of Omaha, and the doctor had a choice of two anatomical specimens. Harvey Braden and John Daley had been picked up on a charge of pilfering horses and were thrown into the Omaha jail. A band of outraged horse owners spirited them from the jail on January 8, 1859, and hanged them from a tree two miles north of nearby Florence.² Some of the lynchings were arrested, but the prosecution dwindled off as such prosecutions often did in an era sensitive about horse ownership. Alfred Sorensen tells substantially the same story in his *The Early History of Omaha*, though he gives

¹*Denver City and Auraria, The Commercial Emportum of the Pike's Peak Gold Regions*, which is dated 1859 but appeared sometime after Jan. 1, 1860.

²Andreas, op. cit., p. 698.

the month of the lynching as March. The *Nebraska Advertiser* for February 10, however, carries a report on the trial of the vigilantes. The record shows no other lynchings in the vicinity at this time. So if the gossip reported by Dr. George L. Miller, founding editor of the *Herald*, was faithfully relayed, it must have been either Braden or Daley who helped with the outfitting of the *Rocky Mountain News* for the voyage across the plains.

A trip westward across the treeless prairies in 1859 was a voyage, not into the unknown, but into a vacuum. Too often in the stories of the Rocky Mountain West it is suggested that the region was *terra incognita* before the fifty-niners came. Actually the Rockies had been rather thoroughly explored and considerably traveled before Cherry Creek got into the news of the day. It was just that the explorers and travelers—except for the fur brigades of mountain men and the Indian traders—found little to detain them in the mountain fastnesses except scenery and good hunting.

Three historic migrations—the Oregon pioneers, the forty-niners to California, and the Mormons to Utah—already had passed through years before the Pike's Peak rush. The Overland Trail up the Platte and over South Pass was a well-established roadway, a broad avenue for westering. But even before these mass movements the Rockies were crisscrossed by the trails of conquistadores, official explorers, trappers, cavalymen, dragoons, diarists, and even gentleman hunters over from England for an outing.

Spanish soldiers as far back as Coronado in 1541 had been in the area. Juan de Oñate possibly had penetrated as far northward as the site of Denver in 1601, and in the year of the nation's independence the hardy friars Silvestre Vélez de Escalante and Francisco A. Domínguez traversed much of the western slope of the Rockies in what is now Colorado. Juan de Ubarri was on the eastern Colorado plains in 1706, and there were others who came, seeking the gold-paved streets of fabled Quivira or pursuing Indian slaves who had the pagan impertinence to run off from the Christian settlements in New Mexico.

Meanwhile French traders were coming up the rivers from the east. They had reached the foothills of the Rockies in 1706, and the Mallet brothers traversed Colorado from north to south as early as 1739. The ruggedly glamorous fur-trade era, which would reach its height in the 1820s and 1830s, had begun. How much of Colorado was trod by the moccasins of these *voyageurs* will never be known precisely, but they went where the beaver and the buffalo were. Most of them were unlettered men, and they left little record. Others who began the written record later practiced a precious discrimination. The Anglo-Saxon historians who started to write things down only a century or so ago made great point of "first white explorer," "first white settler," "first white baby." The bold Spanish and Mexicans, who actually had plunged

into an unknown country, were not white by these writers' standards, and the mountain men, since they freely and frequently took squaws to wife, didn't qualify either.

One who did qualify, by any count, was Lieutenant Zebulon Montgomery Pike, the first official explorer of the Colorado plains and Rockies. Pike was sent out in 1806 to take a look at the farther reaches of newly purchased Louisiana, and he either was a part of the Aaron Burr conspiracy to establish an independent empire in the West or he got lost. Probably the latter, though it's a harsh thing to say about a pathfinder. But he did establish a major landmark in the West which would perpetuate his name and become a lodestone and a catchword. His significant report gave the nation its first reliable estimates of the nature of the Rocky Mountain West. He didn't succeed in his effort to climb his "Grand Peak" in the "Mexican Mountains"; in fact he believed "no human being could have ascended to its pinnacle." Time would place both a cog railroad and an automobile highway on the summit of Pike's Peak.

In 1820, Major Stephen H. Long was dispatched to explore the boundries of the Louisiana Purchase, and the historian-naturalist of his expedition, Dr. Edwin James, led the first recorded ascent of Pike's Peak. The Long party made its way up the Platte (Pike had used the Arkansas River as his roadway), and in the accounts of his tour are the first detailed descriptions of the site which the city of Denver would occupy. Dr. James called Cherry Creek "Vermilion Creek," and Captain John R. Bell, in his recently rediscovered journal, tells of a pleasant camp that was made:

Wednesday, July 5th. Proceeded at 20 minutes before 5 oclock A.M. Major Long & Lieut. Swift in advance of the party again, to select a suitable place for encamping & to take observations—passed two buffalo at a distance, and on the opposite side of the river three creeks that have their source in the mountains—the largest is called Cannon ball creek [present Clear Creek] from the size & form of the stone in its bed—came up with the Major at ½ past 7 oclock halted and encamped for the remainder of the day and night. Dr. James and Mr. Peale with two men, set out on foot to go to the base of the mountains. The Major & Lieut. Swift engaged in taking astronomical observations for determining the latitude & longitude of the place. Dr. Say was quite indisposed, he was in bad health when we left the Engineer cantonment and has not bettered any on the march, but he seldom complains—the hunters killed a deer & an antelope—our camp is beautifully situated on the bank of the river, which is here about 100 yards wide—our tents pitched in grove of cotton wood trees [Denver], that shade us from the scorching rays of the sun—the altitude of the mercury at 91°. About 6 P.M. Dr. James, Mr. Peale & the two men returned, having experienced a hard days travel, without reaching the base of

the mountains—the distance [about fifteen miles] was greater than they anticipated—as far as they did progress the[y] followed the course of the cannon ball creek—which they represent as abounding with fish & a beautiful stream of clear water. . . .³

Throughout the period of exploration the mountain men ranged everywhere ahead of the official parties, always another horizon farther on into the wildernesses. Pike met one of them when the Spanish captured him and took him into Santa Fe, and the trapper showed him some gold he had picked up in the Rockies. Fur-trade forts were built on the Arkansas and Gunnison rivers and on the South Platte at several points north from present Denver. Lonely, strange, self-sufficient men the trappers were. Men who bore famous names bright with romance: Jim Bridger, Kit Carson, Céran St. Vrain, Jim Beckwourth, the mulatto war chief of the Crows, Ezekiel Williams, "Uncle Dick" Wootton, old Jim Baker, Louis Vasquez, Tom ("Broken Hand") Fitzpatrick, Andrew and Milton Sublette, and many others. They ranged the Indian game trails as if the Rockies were their own private hunting park. Most of them were squawmen, and they knew, accepted, and adopted Indian ways. With little equipment other than a "possibles bag," a rifle, and a knife they could live, even prosper, in the virgin forests and among the peaks and crags for a year or more at a time. Then, like as not, they would blow the value of a season's peltries in an orgy of strychnine whiskey and wild fellowship at a rendezvous on the Green River or in a few nights of fandango at Taos. At one time or another many of the mountain men served as trail-knowing, Indian-wise guides to expeditions of exploration, and they taught the newcomers all they knew about the red man's savage but plastic ways. The lessons didn't take very well. Had those who came later been better scholars, had they heeded the trappers' advice about fair dealing and understanding, been less self-righteous in their protestations of "destiny" or their evangelism of strange customs, the West might have been spared decades of bloody Indian wars.

During the 1820s, '30s, and '40s a dozen or more trading posts, bastions of adobe and logs, were built along the rivers of Colorado wherever Indians would come to trade or beaver pews could be gathered. The largest and most famous of these was Bent's Fort on the Arkansas, a stopping place on the Santa Fe Trail, about which much has been written early and late. Little is known about another fur-trade fort which probably was the first settlement at the present site of Denver.

Sketchy accounts occur in several places⁴ of a cottonwood log

³Harlin M. Fuller and LeRoy R. Hafen, eds., *The Journal of Captain John R. Bell* (Glendale, 1957), pp. 146-47.

⁴Smiley, op. cit., p. 152; *Rocky Mountain News*, Feb. 1, 1860; Nolie Mumey, *History of the Early Settlements of Denver* (Glendale, 1942), pp. 29-30; Jerome C. Smiley, *Semi-Centennial History of the State of Colorado* (Chicago, 1913),

stockade apparently built in 1832 by Louis Vasquez on the bank of the South Platte opposite the mouth of the creek once named for him but now called Clear—the Cannon Ball Creek of the Long expedition. This would be at the northern outskirts of modern Denver. Louis—the “Vaskiss” of Francis Parkman’s works—was a French-Canadian and a veritable captain among the mountain men. His brother, Antoine François (“Baroney”) Vasquez, had been interpreter on the Pike sortie, and a nephew, A. Pike Vasquez, would become a freighter and a businessman in pioneer Denver. During his later years Louis Vasquez was a partner of Jim Bridger, the famed “Old Gabe.”

Smiley’s history of Denver, published in 1901, reports that the stockade opposite the mouth of Vasquez Fork “remained there many years,” but by the time Smiley compiled his semicentennial history of Colorado in 1913 he had decided it was a “temporary establishment” and wrote that no remains of it were discovered when “the foundations of Denver were laid.” Smiley’s Denver history connects Jim Beckwourth with the Vasquez stockade, but since he confuses Jim with Pike Vasquez as a nephew of Louis, he probably has his mountain men mixed. All of the accounts agree that the post was a small one.

Some further confirmation of its existence as Denver’s first settlement is found in an unpublished manuscript editor Byers of the *News* gave in 1884 to the historian Hubert Howe Bancroft and which now is preserved in the Bancroft Library, University of California. Byers told Bancroft:

. . . The first Trading Post established in the valley of the South Platte was built in 1832 by Louis Vasquez about 5 miles northeast of the present site of Denver at the junction of Vasquez Fork with the Platte River. . . . A nephew of Louis Vasquez known as “Pike” Vasquez was a clerk in that Trading Post from 1832 to 1836. He was also a citizen of Denver in its early days & I was very intimately acquainted with him. He told me that they frequently purchased gold from trappers & hunters with whom they carried on trade & who informed them that they procured it in the mountains, but he had no knowledge of where in the mountains & seemed to take no interest. In answer to inquiries he said the employes of the Fur Company employed about the Post took no interest in learning where the gold came from or how it was procured & in fact knew very little about anything outside the Post. . . .⁵

The dates Byers gives would fit. For it is known that Louis Vasquez joined with Andrew Sublette in 1837 to build another post subsequently known as Fort Vasquez farther down the Platte. This later fort, a rather

Vol. I, pp. 181–82; Frank Hall, *History of the State of Colorado* (Chicago, 1889), Vol. I, p. 169.

⁵Byers, Bancroft ms., op. cit.

elaborate adobe affair, was in ruins when Francis Parkman came by in 1846, but remnants still remained into the twentieth century. In recent years the fort has been restored as a historical monument and stands beside the paved highway just south of Platteville, thirty-seven miles north of Denver.

The stories of the *News* and of another obscure trading post in the Denver vicinity also intersect. Fort Jackson was built, also in 1837, by Henry Fraeb and Peter A. Sarpy as a close neighbor to Vasquez and Sublette only four miles to the south of Fort Vasquez near the present town of Ione. Sarpy was a "squat, volatile, bushy-bearded Frenchman" whose name punctuates the annals of fur-trade days. He appears to have been everywhere the trapper-hunter brigades went throughout all the time beaver pelts and buffalo robes and tongues were currency. Here, in 1837, he is on the remote South Platte at the foot of the Rockies. Twenty-one years later he is factor at Bellevue on the Missouri south of Omaha, trading with the Omaha Indians. As has been noted, he may have been the person who sold Byers the old hand press of the *Bellevue Gazette* on which the first *Rocky Mountain News* was printed. Byers wrote that he met him in Bellevue in 1858, "living with the Omaha Indians, among whom he was known as 'The Stud-Horse on the Sand Bar.'"⁶ Smiley describes Sarpy as an "irascible man" who "got along much better with the red men than he did with the white ones."⁷

If Smiley's estimate of Sarpy is accurate it would be only typical. Most of the mountain men were much more at home in a tipi than at a booster meeting or a political rally, and there is ample evidence that the self-consciously pioneering settlers who came later, buoyant with local patriotism and gregariously political by instinct, distrusted these shaggy firstcomers of wild habits and no fixed residence. And the decline of the fur-trade era saw an abrupt and fundamental change in the relationships between "new" Westerners and the old and native ones. The mountain man was the last American who could get along with the Indian. Although he could fight the red man ferociously on occasion, trading savagery for savagery in highly personalized combat, he could understand, accept, and live with Indian ways and possessed the dignity of an almost infinite patience. But by 1859 he was growing old and garrulous of past exploits, and dying off. A new breed of Westerner was moving in. Henceforth the plains and mountains would fill with impatient empire-builders whose first reaction to the word "Indian" was to twitch toward a rifle.

In the van of the new movement rode the United States Dragoons, resplendent in colorful uniforms with crossed shoulder belts. Through June, July, and August of 1835, Colonel Henry Dodge led the hundred

⁶Byers, *History of Colorado*, p. 21.

⁷Smiley, *History of Denver*, p. 152.

and twenty men of his 1st Dragoons on a long, looping march to the Rockies, sixteen hundred miles up the Platte, and home to Fort Gibson by way of the Arkansas. They were out to "show the flag," to council with the Indians and demonstrate to them that their Great White Father, possessed of swivel howitzers and many troopers, would brook no foolishnesses. Significantly, the dragoons found no occasion to fire a shot in anger, though they met with parties and villages of Pawnees, Arapahoes, Comanches, and other tribes.

On July 22 the tour of the dragoons brought them to the forking of the Platte and Cherry Creek, and one of their number, young Captain Lemuel Ford, set down in his journal another brief description of the site which would become Denver:

Monday July 20th 1835

The command Marched S 20 West about ten miles & S 10 West 10 Miles with the Rocky Mountains covered with Snow on our right presenting a most magnificent appearance The Buffalowe Still more abundant fat & fine we encamped on the Second Bank of the river fine timbered Bottom with good grass

Tuesday July 21st 1835

remained in camp to day to rest & graize our horses (I was officer of the day)

Wednesday July 22nd 1835

command marched South 22 Miles Country about Same as passed Several days Back Bottom covered with timber Cotton wood & Willow grass good [Denver]. We encamped for the evening on the Plt [Platte]⁸

Other cavalymen followed the dragoons on missions military or exploratory. In 1845, Colonel Stephen Watts Kearny rode west along the Oregon Trail to remind hostile tribes not to molest the emigrants. He, too, returned through Colorado and down the Arkansas. A year later Kearny led his Army of the West out the Santa Fe Trail to the conquest of New Mexico, stirring up the tribes as he went. Lieutenant Colonel William Gilpin had to come back in 1857 on a punitive expedition to relieve Indian plundering of traffic along the trail.

During this same period the Great Pathfinder, John C. Frémont, was trying on five expeditions—1842, 1843, 1845, 1848, and 1853—to find an easy way through the escarpment of the Colorado Rockies. At least three of these probing explorations brought him close to the future site of Denver. The last, privately financed to seek a transcontinental railroad route and advance presidential aspirations, followed the route taken

⁸Nolie Mumey, *March of the First Dragoons to the Rocky Mountains in 1835: The Diaries and Maps of Lemuel Ford* (Denver, 1957), pp. 62-63.

earlier in the year by Captain John W. Gunnison from Bent's Fort over Cochetopa Pass to the river of deep cañons and big trout which now bears Gunnison's name.

The scene of Denver before its gold rush also is interestingly described by two notable diarists. Rufus B. Sage, newspaperman, trapper, and naturalist, spent much of the period 1842-44 roaming the Colorado Rockies, and several times he made his campfire where a busy city's traffic now hums. In the autumn of 1842 he left Fort Lancaster, on the Platte north of Denver near present Fort Lupton, bound for Taos. He followed what was by now a well-established trappers' and traders' trail linking the fur forts of the South Platte with Bent's Fort down on the Arkansas and with the New Mexican settlements. Thirty-five miles upstream, at Cherry Creek, he found the increasingly popular stopping place among the cottonwoods and willows already was populated by "a camp of free traders and hunters."

Sage describes the scene, and incidentally explains why the name of the creek has by now been changed from Vermilion to Cherry.

This stream is an affluent of the Platte, from the southeast, heading in a broad ridge of pine hills and rocks, known as the "Divide" [separating the watersheds of the Platte and the Arkansas]. It pursues its course for nearly sixty miles, through a broad valley of rich soil, tolerably well timbered, and shut in for the most part by high plats of table land,—at intervals thickly studded with lateral pines, cedars, oaks, and shrubs of various kinds,—gradually expanding its banks as it proceeds, and exchanging a bed of rock and pebbles for one of quicksand and gravel, till it finally attains a width of nearly two hundred yards, and in places is almost lost in the sand. The stream derives its name from the abundance of cherry [chokecherries] found upon it. . . .

Our route bore nearly due south for twenty miles following the Platte bottom to the mouth of Cherry creek. . . . The Platte presented heavy groves of timber upon both banks, as did also its islands, while its bottoms appeared fertile.

The mountains, some fifteen miles to our right, towering aloft with their snow-capped summits and dark frowning sides, looked like vast piles of clouds, big with storm and heaped upon the lap of the earth; while the vaporscuds that flitted around them, seemed as the ministers of pent up wrath, in readiness to pour forth their torrents and deluge the surrounding plains, or let loose the fierce tornado and strew its path with desolation.

Three or four miles before reaching our present camp, we passed a village of Arapahos on its way to the mountains, in pursuit of game.⁹

⁹Rufus B. Sage, *Scenes in the Rocky Mountains* (Philadelphia, 1846), quoted in LeRoy R. and Ann W. Hafen, *Rufus B. Sage: His Letters and Papers* (Glendale, 1956), Vol. II, pp. 65-66.

Sage goes on to tell about the camp of free trappers he found at Cherry Creek. There were, he writes, four lodges, three of whites and one of Blackfoot Indians. "Each of the whites has his squaw wife, and the usual accompaniment of ruddy faced children. In regard to the latter, I must say they were more beautiful, interesting, and intelligent than the same number of full-bloods,—either of whites or Indians."

LeRoy R. Hafen, dean of Rocky Mountain historians, speculates that one of the squawmen was "Uncle John" Smith, who had a Blackfoot wife, and a few years later became one of the founding fathers of the Denver City Town Company. Hafen also believes "Uncle John," a seasoned veteran of the Rockies since 1826, may have been the historical person who served as model for the character Killbuck in George Frederick Ruxton's *Life in the Far West*, one of the most authentic accounts of the era of the mountain men.

Sage returned to Cherry Creek, this time down out of a winter hunt in the peak-rimmed parks of the central Rockies, on December 19 and found a land flowing with milk and honey:

Our horses being quite enfeebled from the fatigue of travel, we gladly availed ourselves of the presence of buffalo to prolong our stay at Cherry creek some ten days, and meanwhile found no difficulty in procuring a continued feast of good things from the dense herds that thronged the country upon every side.

The severe weather and frequent snows of the past two months, had driven these animals from the open prairie into the creek bottoms and mountains, whose vicinities were completely blackened with their countless thousands.

The antelope, too, seemed to have congregated from all parts, and covered the country in one almost unbroken band. Their numbers exceeded anything of the kind I ever witnessed before or since. . . .¹⁰

But there were wolves there, too, attracted by the plenitude of game, and Sage tells of a unique council of war which a pack conducted on hills now well within the Denver city limits:

Upon a neighboring eminence some fifty or a hundred of these insatiate marauders were congregated, as if for consultation. Adjoining this, two parallel lines of low hills led out from the river bottom into the prairie, for five or six miles, defining a narrow valley, at the extremity of which a large band of antelope were quietly grazing.

The chief topic of the wolfine conference seemed to have particular reference to this circumstance; for, in a very short time, the council dispersed, and its members betook to the hills skirting the valley before described, and, stationing themselves upon both lines at regular intervals, two of them commenced the attack by leisurely approaching

¹⁰*Ibid.*, p. 191.

their destined prey from opposite directions, in such a manner as to drive the whole band between the defile of hungry expectants. This done, the chase began without further preliminary.

Each wolf performed his part by pursuing the terrified antelope till relieved by his next companion, and he by the succeeding one; and so on, alternately; taking care to reverse their course at either extremity of the defile—again and again to run the death-race, until, exhausted by the incessant effort and crazed with terror, the agile animals, that were wont to bid defiance to the swiftest steed, and rival the storm-wind in fleetness, fell easy victims to the sagacity of their enemies.¹¹

Only four years after Sage had watched with fascination this seemingly planned attack of the wolf pack, another and even more famous diarist visited Cherry Creek. He was Francis Parkman, whose *The Oregon Trail* is part and parcel of every literate boy's knowledge of the Old West. Parkman came in 1846 and on August 15

. . . A long morning's march brought us to Cherry Creek, over a very hot and dry prairie. Weather too smoky to see the mts. Creek dry—camp of Mormon emigrants, who passed this way with Richard a few week[s] ago. Cherries—plums—black currents—and gooseberries. No water in creek—dug holes and got some. Camped at night on the creek.¹²

It is interesting to watch this brief sketch of Denver in the dry season become a graphic, colorful description in *The Oregon Trail*:

About noon the next day we reached Cherry Creek. Here was a great abundance of wild cherries, plums, gooseberries, and currants. The stream, however, like most of the others which we passed, was dried up with the heat, and we had to dig holes in the sand to find water for ourselves and our horses. Here we found traces of the camp of some Mormon emigrants, who had passed this way with Richard some weeks ago. The following day we left the banks of the creek, which we had been following for some time, and began to cross the high dividing ridge which separates the waters of the Platte from those of Arkansas. The scenery was altogether changed. In place of the burning plains, we passed through rough and savage glens, and among hills crowned with a dreary growth of pines. We encamped among these solitudes on the night of the sixteenth of August. A tempest was threatening. The sun went down among volumes of jet-black cloud edged with a bloody red. But in spite of these portentous signs, we neglected to put up the tent, and being extremely fatigued, lay down on the ground and fell asleep. The storm broke about midnight, and we pitched the

¹¹Ibid., p. 192.

¹²Mason Wade, ed., *The Journals of Francis Parkman* (New York, 1947), Vol. II, p. 472.

tent amid darkness and confusion. In the morning all was fair again, and Pike's Peak, white with snow, was towering above the wilderness afar off.¹³

Parkman's trip through Colorado was a leisurely one, essentially a sight-seeing excursion, but the most luxurious of the early Colorado "tourists" undoubtedly was the Irish baronet, Sir George Gore of Sligo, whose name has been left behind on a range of mountains in memory of his spectacular visit. Sir George came to Colorado in 1855 strictly *pour le sport*. He brought with him a retinue of fifty servants, secretaries, stewards, cooks, fly makers, and dog tenders, and an outfit which consisted of a hundred and twelve horses, twelve yoke of oxen, six wagons, twenty-one carts, fourteen hunting dogs, an arsenal of firearms, and bundles of fishing rods. The blueblood hunting party remained in the wilderness two years. Its kill was totted up at forty grizzlies, nearly three thousand buffaloes, and uncounted thousands of antelope and deer. During about half his hunt Sir George was guided by "Old Gabe," Jim Bridger himself. Jim told later how it was his noble client's habit to sleep until about 10 or 11 A.M. in his well-furnished pavilion, rise, bathe, break his fast, and then set out for a day of hunting which often extended into the night. Late supper included the proper wine, and then Sir George often would read aloud to Bridger by the light of the campfire. The sporting peer was an admirer of Shakespeare, but "Old Gabe" allowed the Bard "was a leetle too highfalutin'" and moreover he "rayther calculated that thar big Dutchman, Mr. Full-stuff, was a leetle too fond of lager beer." The same amount of alcohol, Jim felt, might better be infused in the medium of good old bourbon whiskey.¹⁴

So Shakespeare, too, had been in the Colorado wilds before the peopling started. The era of exploration, fur trade, and mere visiting, casual or purposeful, was drawing to a close. A good military road now followed the old trappers' trail up the South Platte, linking Fort Laramie in present Wyoming with the new American territory of New Mexico to the south and fording the river at the point where a city would be born.

It was not that the charms, hazards, and possible riches of the Rockies were unknown in 1858. Copious reports, both official and literary, had been turned in. The difficulty was that a formidable country stretched between the Missouri River frontier and those far and shining mountains. Treeless, waterless, barren, the Great Plains stretched westward for five hundred miles or more as a sea of grass and sand on which only the most adventurous embarked.

¹³Francis Parkman, *The Oregon Trail* (Heritage Press ed., New York, 1943), p. 235.

¹⁴J. Cecil Alter, *James Bridger: A Historical Narrative* (reprint ed., Columbus, 1951), pp. 264ff.

Pike had reported on his return to civilization in 1808 that the plains should be written off as uninhabitable. "But from these immense prairies may arise one great advantage to the United States, viz., the restriction of our population to some certain limits, and thereby a continuation of the union. Our citizens being so prone to rambling, and extending themselves on the frontiers, will, through necessity, be constrained to limit their extent on the west to the borders of the Missouri and Mississippi, while they leave the prairies, incapable of cultivation, to the wandering and uncivilized Aborigines of the country."

Long echoed Pike's sentiments, saw the plains as a buffer against enemy action by the Spanish, and labeled them on his map the "Great American Desert." This section of America was "almost wholly unfit for cultivation, and of course uninhabitable by a people depending upon agriculture for their subsistence."

Even a half century later another military man, General William Tecumseh Sherman, would look out across the ocean of grass and write to his friend, Admiral David Dixon Porter: "Our Plains resemble your seas."¹⁵ And though he would change his mind later, Sherman then believed that "In general terms, the settlements of Kansas, Dacotah, and Iowa have nearly or quite reached the Western limit of land fit for cultivation, Parallel 99° of West Longitude. Then begin the Great Plains 600 miles wide, fit only for Nomadic tribes of Indians, Tartars, or Buffaloes. . . ."¹⁶

But Pike and Long reckoned without a powerful stimulus which would act upon the westbound instincts of a naturally rambling people, and it fell to the lot of Sherman to protect the ramblers from the savages when they refused to be constrained by the Missouri River. The stimulus, of course, was gold.

Reports of gold in the Colorado Rockies had been received by Pike, and Sage relates the story that a war party of Arapahoes once used solid gold bullets against the Pawnees, "every bullet discharged killing an enemy." There had been many other scattered and more or less vague reports. While Sir George Gore was cruising the Colorado parks, legend insists, a member of his party discovered gold in a stream. Sir George immediately packed up his wine cellar and trophies, broke camp, and moved on lest gold fever spoil his hunt. The mountain men knew there was gold about, but they were disinterested. Editor Byers of the *News* was not the only one who would record, incredulously, that these wild roamers "took no interest" in something so patently the goal of all rational mankind. Pike had expressed similar amazement when James

¹⁵Sherman to Porter, Nov. 24, 1865, Library of Congress; quoted in Robert G. Athearn, *William Tecumseh Sherman and the Settlement of the West*, (Norman, 1956), p. 13.

¹⁶Sherman to John A. Rawlins, March 6, 1866, National Archives; Athearn, op. cit., p. 36.

Pursley, or Purcell, told him in Santa Fe in 1807 that he had found gold at the head of La Platte and had carried some of it in his shot pouch for months. But "losing in his mind all the IDEAL VALUE which mankind have stamped on that metal, he threw the sample away." The capital letters are Pike's.

A party of Cherokees, passing through en route to California in 1850, found a little gold in Ralston Creek, a tributary of Vasquez Fork. This was the first discovery firmly placed in the vicinity of future Denver. The Cherokees, however, went on to California seeking bigger bonanzas, which they didn't find. Other reported strikes in the Cherry Creek area dotted the next decade. Byers, in his *History of Colorado*, said General Thomas Taylor of Kentucky told him in later years that he had washed some dust out of the Cherry Creek sands in 1852 while he was on a campaign to "chastise the Comanches."

Numerous other passers-by, prospecting parties, and cavalry missions produced additional stories of precious metal in the Pike's Peak region. The reports, printed with some embellishments in border newspapers and then copied by the press throughout the East, built up increasing interest in the craggy country beyond the hazardous plains. Slowly the reports of gold began to firm up, although no one yet had recovered enough dust to make the trip worth while.

A little real Pike's Peak gold actually began to show up in the frontier villages to bolster the newspaper accounts, which became increasingly glowing. A Delaware Indian named Fall Leaf went out in 1857 as scout and hunter for Major John Sedgwick in a punitive campaign against the Cheyennes. Fall Leaf found some dust in one of the streams near Cherry Creek, and when he returned to his home in eastern Kansas he showed it off around the town of Lawrence. The following May, Captain Randolph B. Marcy was leading a supply party from New Mexico to General A. S. Johnson's army, then at Fort Bridger beyond South Pass in Wyoming. The supply train paused at the mouth of Cherry Creek to build a ferryboat. The Platte, swollen by the spring runoff, could not be forded by the mules and wagons. While the boat was being constructed one of Marcy's civilian teamsters, George S. Simpson, washed out a few flecks of gold from the sands of the creek. Simpson passed on his gold to an eastbound friend at Fort Bridger, and it made its way to Westport, Missouri, to add to the fulminating excitement. John Cantrell, or Cantrill, of Westport, heading a party of traders States-bound from Salt Lake, stopped by Cherry Creek and took home both some dust and a sackful of sand and gravel from the stream. This he panned out publicly in the streets of Kansas City in the fall of 1858 for a demonstrated yield of twenty-five cents in gold to the panful. The Missouri River country quickly calculated how many panfuls of pay dirt could be handled in a single day and went wild.

Meanwhile, during the summer, the first serious prospecting parties

had arrived at Cherry Creek and the settlement of future Denver began. The Great American Desert with its alkali wastes and its Indians held no insurmountable terrors if gold could be picked up at twenty-five cents a grab on its farther shore.

One of the principal parties of fifty-eighters was led by William Green Russell and his brothers, Dr. Levi J. and J. Oliver, all from the Lumpkin County gold region of northern Georgia.¹⁷ Green Russell, as he was known, was married to a Cherokee, and from his wife's relatives out in Indian Territory he learned of the discoveries made in 1850. Ever since then the Cherokees had wanted to go back to Pike's Peak to follow up on their original strike. The Russell brothers, experienced with gold, were interested too, and they agreed to head the expedition.

The Russell-Cherokee party set out in May and was joined on the trail by two groups of Missourians, so that on June 24, 1858, a band of a hundred and four eager prospectors arrived at the mouth of Cherry Creek. Gold was found, but not much, and the eagerness wilted. By July 2 some of the wagons already were headed back eastward. Green Russell—who wore his beard plaited into two long braids that could be tucked into his shirt front—and thirteen others stayed on. Later in the summer they began to find gold in paying quantities at Little Dry Creek, some eight miles farther up the Platte, and by October they had accumulated five hundred dollars worth.

Other parties were joining the Cherokees and Georgians in the field. Out from Lawrence, Kansas, came forty-nine men, two women, and a child, led by John Easter. They had seen Fall Leaf's nuggets, tied up in a rag. The Indian had agreed, and then refused, to accompany them as a guide, but the thirteen wagons struck out on May 24 anyway, taking along Sharps rifles and bowie knives for protection and a guitar and violin as cultural necessities. The Lawrence gold seekers did not come immediately to Cherry Creek but headed straight for Pike's Peak, the one landmark everyone was sure of. During the summer months they prospected the streams around the foot of the peak with no success. A passing Mexican packer—whose language they couldn't understand—offered to show them where the gold was, and units of Lawrence men followed him on two wild-goose chases through the hills and down toward New Mexico. They returned with a handful of yellow iron pyrites—"fool's gold."

The women of the Lawrence party—Mrs. James H. Holmes and Mrs. Robert Middleton—left their mark on time by bringing paleface femininity, with some forcefulness, into the rough and masculine wastelands. Pert little Julia Holmes, in particular, will be remembered. She was a twenty-year-old bride, and her slight figure was highly charged

¹⁷Mrs. Richard French Spencer of San Antonio, granddaughter of Oliver Russell, says the full names were William Greeneberry Russell and Levi Jasper (rather than James, as it sometimes appears) Russell.

with moral conviction and physical endurance. One of her fellow travelers said of her:

She is a regular woman's righter, wears the bloomer, and was quite indignant when informed that she was not allowed to stand on guard. She is young, handsome, and intelligent.¹⁸

Tiny Julia, clothed in her scandalous bloomers and armored with her convictions about the natural superiority of women, accomplished what Zebulon Pike said couldn't be done. She climbed Pike's Peak.¹⁹ She was the first woman to do it. Her group made the third recorded ascent of what is probably America's most famous mountain. From the summit on August 5, 1858, Julia wrote home to mother:

. . . I have accomplished the task which I marked out for myself, and now I feel amply repaid for all my toil and fatigue. Nearly every one tried to discourage me from attempting it, but I believed that I should succeed, and now, here I am, and I feel I would not have missed this glorious sight for anything at all.

In all probability, I am the first woman who has stood upon the the summit of this mountain, and gazed upon this wondrous scene which my eyes now behold. How I sigh for a poet's power of description, so that I might give you some faint idea of the grandeur and beauty of this scene. Extending as far as the eye can reach, lie the great level plains, stretched out in all their verdure and beauty, while the winding of the grand Arkansas is visible for many miles. We can also see distinctly where many of the smaller tributaries unite with it. Then the rugged rocks all around, and the almost endless succession of mountains and rocks below, the broad blue sky over our heads, and seemingly so very near—all, and everything, on which the eye can rest, fills the mind with infinitude, and sends the soul to God.²⁰

Julia never got to the Denver settlements. She and her husband and some others of the Lawrence party tired of questing gold and made their way south to the comparatively civilized adobe villages of New Mexico, where she became tutor to the children of a wealthy family. Word of the greater success of the Russells at Little Dry Creek now reached the remnants of the Lawrence party, and they moved north to arrive at Cherry Creek on September 6.

Meanwhile the first of several unenduring settlements had been started.

¹⁸Lawrence *Republican*, July 15, 1858.

¹⁹An engaging story of Julia Holmes and her climb is told in Agnes Wright Spring, *A Bloomer Girl on Pike's Peak* (Denver, 1949).

²⁰*Daily Missouri Republican*, Oct. 17, 1858. The same scene which so enraptured Julia would prove the inspiration, in 1893, for Katharine Lee Bates' patriotic hymn, "America the Beautiful."

The first to bear a name was Placer Camp, which is what the Russell-Cherokee prospectors called their clutch of huts built at the mouth of Little Dry Creek in midsummer of 1858. A bronze tablet on the bridge which carries present South Santa Fe Drive across the creek bed near West Dartmouth Avenue now marks the approximate location of Placer Camp.

The second and more substantial settlement was called Montana or Montana City. It was established in September and represented the first effort of the newly arrived Lawrence party to provide winter quarters for itself. A formal "Montana Town Company" was organized with Josiah Hinman as president and W. J. Boyer as secretary. William Hartley, a civil engineer, surveyed and staked out a town with blocks, lots, streets, and alleys. Fifteen or twenty cabins were built, fronting on the streets in an orderly fashion. Montana City came into being a short distance north of Placer Camp, and its site also is marked with a present-day tablet. A marker at South Huron Street and West Evans Avenue perpetuates the memory of Montana City as the first organized town and "the beginning of Denver." It was a short-lived beginning.

Dissension had broken out. Montana had been located where it was in order to be close to the Little Dry Creek diggings, the only placer that had produced anything even vaguely auspicious in the way of flour gold. Some in the Lawrence party didn't like that location. They felt their town should have been closer to the spot where the regular military road from Fort Bridger to New Mexico crossed the Platte in the shoal water formed by the entry of Cherry Creek into the larger stream. The dissenters argued that a new town ought always to be established on a major traffic artery. This country had only one such—the military trail which followed the old trappers' trace laid out on an Indian pathway nobody knew how ancient.

Moreover blandishments in chamber-of-commerce style already were appearing. John S. ("Uncle John") Smith, trapper and squawman, had a wickiup in the cottonwood bottoms at Cherry Creek. He also had, it was charged, a barrel of whiskey with which he was proselytizing prospective settlers.

For one reason or another a second town company was formed before the month of September was out. Six men of the Lawrence party (John A. Churchill, Frank M. Cobb, Adnah French, William Hartley, Charles Nichols, and William M. Smith) picked up T. C. Dickson, originally one of the Russell boys, and moved north down the river. They took in "Uncle John" and his partner, William McGaa, who, the folklore of Denver insists, was the son of a Lord Mayor of London and had been educated for the clergy but had forsworn English comforts to become a trapper in the American wilds and take an Arapaho squaw. This group organized on September 24 as the St. Charles Town Association.

For the site of their city they chose what is now the downtown business

section of Denver. St. Charles was staked off on land lying northeast of Cherry Creek and east of the Platte. It was a paper town. Having established their claim, the St. Charles men set out for home on October 1, planning to winter in eastern Kansas and return in the spring with an official charter from the Kansas Territory legislature for their town.

Throughout this three- or four-month flurry of town founding, additional expeditions of gold hunters were creaking into the area behind their oxen or mules, and real estate promotion cannot have been far from the minds of some of the founders. Gold was hard come by, they had discovered, but a lot of men who didn't know that already were arriving, and more would come. The newcomers probably could be sold town property at tidy profits. With a duly embossed go-ahead from the Kansas legislature, the St. Charles town proprietors might do a lot better as town promoters than they had as prospectors.

As they moved down the Platte toward home the St. Charles men met the first gold-seekers moving toward Pike's Peak after seeing Cantrell's twenty-five-cents-a-pan demonstration in the streets of Kansas City and Westport. Here was a threat that the St. Charles townsite might be jumped. Charles Nichols was dispatched back to the mouth of Cherry Creek to winter through and guard the claim. The fears of jumping were amply justified.

For at the head of one of the westbound parties rode "General" William Larimer, a shrewd, forceful, and experienced leader of men and an accomplished town boomer. He had been active in the early affairs of Nebraska Territory, had organized the town of Larimer²¹ overlooking the junction of the Platte and Missouri rivers, and subsequently moved on to Leavenworth in Kansas. The Larimer party was en route from Leavenworth and Lecompton to the gold fields. It arrived November 16 and, despite the patrol of Charles Nichols, unceremoniously jumped the St. Charles claim and took over. On November 22 officers were elected and a constitution adopted for the Denver City Company. The town was named for James W. Denver, who had been governor of Kansas Territory when the Leavenworth party left home but by now already had resigned that strife-plagued post. The name of Denver thus appeared in the new land under auspices which, before and since, subjected less adroit men to neck-stretching.

Before Denver City engineered its coup, however, Auraria had come into being across on the southwest side of the creek, east of the Platte. Like St. Charles, Auraria owed its beginning to remnants of the Russell and Lawrence parties. Green and Oliver Russell and others had left for home on October 1, taking "a few hundred weights" of gold of "a light chaffy character." On October 28, Dr. Levi Russell, R. J. Pierce, William McFadding, William McKimens, and Luke Tierney arrived back from

²¹Goss, *op. cit.*, p. 17.

the military and trading post at Fort Garland in the San Luis Valley of southern Colorado with provisions for the winter. They joined with "Uncle John" Smith in erecting a double cabin far down on the point of land later claimed by Auraria. The cabin was the start of "Indian Row," a déclassé neighborhood which came to be sniffingly regarded as a sort of early slum.

The Russell-Smith cabin also has been considered the first more or less permanent structure on the site of Denver. The first Denver historians consistently withheld this designation from Smith's earlier shanty. They were acutely conscious of such distinctions and made it plain that a hut built by a low trapper could not qualify in their catalogues of civic progress. The Russell-Smith cabin, on the other hand, was at least half free from the taint of squawman origins, and so it could be counted as a "first." Similarly, Smith, William McGaa, and others of their redolent crew—they undoubtedly smelled ripely of beaver oil and rancid skins—never were able to make the grade as Denver's "first settlers," although they were there first and had been stopping at Cherry Creek for years.

As more and more new arrivals camped around the Russell-Smith cabin the notion of another town company inevitably bubbled up. And so a public meeting was called on October 30. Committees were formed in the best American tradition, a site chosen, and on November 1 the constitution of the Auraria Town Company was adopted. The name came from Auraria, Georgia, home of the Russell boys. William A. McFadding was elected president of the company, Judson H. Dudley vice-president, Dr. Russell secretary, and "Uncle John" treasurer, which seems to indicate that, although the old trapper may have smelled bad and been otherwise held in disrepute, he was recognized as having integrity enough to be trusted with the municipal coffers. Smith and McGaa happily and diplomatically changed sides with complete freedom during these days of intertown contests which tried the souls of less pliable men. Both had been founding fathers of the ill-fated St. Charles enterprise, McGaa as vice-president and Smith as treasurer. Now both were members of the Auraria company, with "Uncle John" again in a post of public trust. A few weeks later, not wishing to offend any of their newly arrived friends, both were pleased to join up in the Denver City company too. This refusal to stand hitched still greatly vexed historian Jerome Smiley a half century later; he regarded it as evidence of unreliability and scandalous want of civic patriotism. He summarily denied to the pleasant joiners—and their squaws, of course—all distinction as "first settlers." Social snobbery has deep roots in Denver.

CHAPTER THREE

Pike's Peak or Bust!

IT WAS coming up winter now, and the "Pike's Peak or Bust!" commotion was approaching full cry.

Of those who remained behind to brave it out in the contentious settlements at Cherry Creek, few had much of an idea what a winter in the Far West might be like. They expected the worst. Many of them knew the damp, marrow-numbing cold of Missouri Valley winters, and the craggy mountains which here seemed to lean over and peer down into the lonely cabins foretold a violent season. Surely the wind would rip down from those peaks and, as in Iowa, a man's breath would stand frozen before his face. The few score settlers and hardy ones who elected to essay a Rocky Mountain winter knew very well that they were far from home. Comforts of hearth and wife, of parson, Saturday night sociable, village pump and town saloon—all these were on the far, left-behind side of the desolate prairie.

They knew, too, that they were illegal squatters in a distant land which rightly belonged to red men about whose intentions one never could be quite sure.

The several town companies were bold intruders, trespassers. The treaty of Fort Laramie back in 1851 had guaranteed all this land east of the Rockies between the Platte and the Arkansas rivers to the Arapaho and Cheyenne Indians. The tribes had been promised their sway over the prairies, rich in the all-important buffalo herds, and the Great White Father further had pledged fifty thousand dollars a year in benefits to the Indians. The solemn chiefs had agreed to the bargain, and the federal government had paid *some* of the annuities provided for in the treaty. Technicalities in Washington had prevented formal ratification of the treaty. Washington had other things on its mind—including preservation of the Union—at the time, and the troubles of a few thousand savages on a remote frontier were only minor annoyances. But as far as the Arapahoes and Cheyennes were concerned, the treaty was in full force and binding. By and large they faithfully observed its provisions. Only when obstreperous and trigger-happy white men fecklessly invaded their guaranteed preserve, or when the annual presents failed to come through, did the braves of the warrior clans thrust aside the counsel of their chiefs and take to the warpath. The provocations were many. It is hardly sur-

prising that young braves, their manhood still to be proved by tribal standards, should have become impatient with casual treaty breaking and answered, now and again, with violence.

Thoughts of bloodshed rested uneasily beneath the scalps of the trespassers wintering at Cherry Creek, exposed, uncomfortable, isolated. Although it would be another six years before Indian patience was finally exhausted by the constant faithlessness of his white brother, it can well be imagined that the Cherry Creekers in the winter of 1858-59 created Indian raids out of every chance sound which disturbed the prairie night or stirred in the brush along the river. Not only was the Laramie Treaty in effect so far as the Arapahoes and Cheyennes were concerned, but the Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854 also had solemnly repromised that the Indian hunting grounds were not subject to entry "until said tribe shall signify their assent to the President of the United States. . . ." By 1861 the Arapahoes and Cheyennes had been persuaded to cede their title to lands "in the Pike's Peak region" with a new treaty signed at Bent's Fort, but it was not until May 28, 1864, that a congressional act finally confirmed white men's title to the land on which Denver meanwhile had grown up. Until then, and especially in the winter of 1858-59, this was Indian country: by treaty, by law, by prior possession, by every standard except the "destiny" in Fourth of July speeches. And especially, the settlers must have reflected queasily, by the sheer ease of dominance and control.

But neither red savage nor Rocky Mountain winter measured up to the fears.

Indians did not attack the defenseless Cherry Creek outpost. In fact a village of Arapahoes spent most of the season camped in the bottoms in full view of the interlopers.

Nor was the winter a harsh one. It turned out to be mild, dry, and open, as many Denver winters are. The peaks to the west shielded, rather than threatened, the settlements. Game was plentiful, and the weather so nice that two outdoor Christmas parties could be held.

One of them has been mentioned. Dick Wootton was host. He had rolled in from the south with several wagons of trading goods on Christmas Eve. Part of his cargo consisted of barrels of Taos lightning and another high-powered whiskey called Wallipete. Dick's fellow trader and mountain man, Céran St. Vrain, had retired as the trapping days waned and gone into business down in New Mexico. One of his enterprises was a small distillery at the Wallipete pueblo which turned out a wheat liquor "clear as spring water and very fierce." Wootton rolled out a keg of his friend's distillate, bashed in the head, hung a tin cup on a cottonwood limb, and told the community: "Be my guest." The town of Auraria accepted as a man, and the word of free whiskey quickly crossed the creek to bring Denver City to the party.

A slightly more decorous celebration was taking place at the "ranche"

of Captain R. A. Spooner on the Platte three miles below Denver City. It was complete down to bill of fare, toasts, formal resolutions, and high poetry. An account of the feast was sent east by A. O. McGrew, Pennsylvania printer and newspaperman who had trundled a wheelbarrow across the plains that autumn to become *a* if not *the* "Wheelbarrow Man." McGrew later became city editor of the *New York Evening News*.

Some of the items on the menu he reported were: oyster and oxtail soups, salmon trout, corned beef, buffalo tongue, elk tongue, venison à la mode, antelope, grizzly bear, mountain pig, pheasant, rabbit, turkey, duck, sage hen, prairie chicken, squirrel, prairie dog, snipe, mountain rats, white swans, quails, sand-hill crane, prickly pear, and dried mountain plums. The wine list embraced madeira, champagne, golden sherry, cherry bounce, hock, Monongahela whiskey, claret, brandy, scotch whiskey, jam rum, bourbon whiskey, and Taos lightning.¹ How much of this menu was window dressing for the folks down east in Nebraska probably can be judged from the fact that the "Wheelbarrow Man" later earned fame as a notorious hoaxer. But considering the plenitude of game that season, the Christmas guests of Captain Spooner had little occasion, in contrast with a later prominent pioneer, to "damn a country where dried apple pies are a luxury."

The toasts were mellow, the songs hearty, and the after-dinner speech by "General" Larimer magniloquent. One of the offerings of the Resolutions Committee resolved that

Although there are good things come up from Old Taos,
Its Whisky ain't worth three skips of a Louse.

The convivial banqueteers, ranged along outdoor tables of whipsawed planking, also paid their respects to "Eve's fair daughters," much missed in their absence, and their disrespects to those men who cursed the country and departed because they were unable to achieve a fortune in a day. "Let them go; we have no use for them here; they are much better at home, where they can have someone to wash their faces every morning, and see that they do not stray too far from home." A formal salute was made to "The Press," which was not yet among those present:

That mighty engine which controls Powers and Principalities, converts howling wilderness into smiling fields and busy marts of commerce, sheds its blessing alike upon the rich and poor, the great and the small, the lowly and the exalted; the lever which moves the world. May its influence never be perverted to serve base purposes; may our case not be to copy after others, but may we make it rule to stick to our sheets (when we get one) as long as there are quoins (coins) in the bank,

¹*Omaha Times*, Feb. 17, 1859; quoted by Dolores C. Renze, "Not So Rugged at All," in *Denver Westerners' Brand Book*: 1952 (Denver, 1933), pp. 157-58.

after which we will down with the dust, even though imposing stones rear themselves before our forms in our arduous chase after the precious metal.

All in a spirit of innocent merriment, to which correspondent McGrew went on to contribute epic poetry:

Way out upon the Platte, near Pike's Peak we were told
There by a little digging, we could get a pile of gold,
So we bundled up our duds, resolved at least to try
And tempt old Madam Fortune, root, hog, or die. . . .

Speculation is the fashion even at this early stage,
And corner lots and big hotels appear to be the rage,
The emigration's bound to come, and to greet them we will try
Big pig, little pig, root, hog, or die. . . .²

When bellies were round and verse had run its course, the Spooner ranch party adjourned to "town" full in a holiday mood. Dick Wootton's guests were similarly situated, and apparently less critical of the merits of Taos lightning. McGrew wrote:

. . . we found the town alive with an influx of miners. . . . In a short time an immense fire was blazing in the public square, and Terpsichore answered to the voice of Orpheus. Light hearts, merry countenances, and active feet were soon in motion, and the dance continued until midnight. . . . Groups of Indians, with their squaws and papooses, filled up the background. It was a picture that Rembrandt would have contemplated with delight. . . .

Although the dances must have been largely male caperings, goat-footed and tap-lush, the Spooner camp's mournful love songs to absent woman did not state the situation with entire accuracy. Paleface woman had made her entry into the Pike's Peak country but was doubly precious by her rarity. According to Smiley, the first non-Indian females to settle in Denver were Mrs. S. M. Rooker and her daughter, name unrecorded, who arrived August 30, 1858, stopped first at Placer Camp, and then moved into Auraria. At Christmas there were five women in camp, not counting squaws: Mrs. Rooker and daughter; "Countess" Katrina Murat, who is supposed to have made the community's first American flag from her red petticoat; Mrs. David Smoke, whose cabin became, in February, the El Dorado Hotel; and Wootton's second wife, a dark-eyed Taos girl who had arrived just the day before.

The refining and gentling influence had been supplied, though it

²Omaha *Times*, *ibid.*; quoted in LeRoy R. Hafen, *Colorado and Its People* (New York, 1948), Vol. I, p. 263.

would require several years really to assert itself, and the country was slowly coming up to the mark. Obstetrically, too, progress was being made. On March 8 the first native son was born and named, appropriately, William Denver McGaa. His mother was omitted by the early record-keepers from their census of "first" ladies; she was a half-breed Sioux. Her son, however, was permitted to make the grade as a "first." The father, William McGaa, already has figured in the chronicles. McGaa named his son for Denver, and Denver, briefly, named one of its streets for McGaa. Present Market Street originally was platted as McGaa, but the "better element" in town saw to it that the honor was taken away a little later when the street's namesake took to frequenting low dives and perambulating the avenues with a skinful.

Meanwhile other settlements were coming into being as a population straggled in. During the winter of '58-'59 there were camps at half a dozen points in addition to the several clusters of huts at the junction of Cherry Creek with the Platte. There were a few cabins at Plum Creek, farther up the river. Six miles west up Clear Creek was Arapahoe City and beyond that Mountainvale against the foothills. Off to the southeast at the headwaters of Cherry Creek, Russellville had been started. Thirty miles to the northwest Red Rock Camp or "Eleven Cabins" occupied the site of the present university town of Boulder. Spooner's Ranche—Westerners added an *e* to "ranch" for many years—has been mentioned; facing it from the opposite bank of the Platte was Curtis' Ranche, and downstream from these points were Chat D'Aubrey's trading post, Sander's Ranche, and remnant settlements clinging to the sites of the old Platte Valley fur-trade forts.

As 1858 drew to a close Auraria had about fifty cabins and Denver City some twenty-five, and Yankee commercial genius was asserting itself. The first Denver business was the mercantile firm of Blake & Williams. Charles H. Blake and Andrew J. Williams arrived from Crescent City, Iowa, at the close of October and established themselves with a stock of general merchandise in Auraria. A week later Kinna & Nye brought in a supply of hardware, sheet iron, and tinner's goods. J. D. Ramage, an itinerant jeweler and repairer of watches, established himself early in December, also in Auraria, and at Christmas Wootton set up his shop and public house. Thomas Pollock arrived on December 29 and opened the first smithy.

The pioneers now could get a watch repaired or a worn wagon wheel retired, but the sorry little "cities" still formed only a forlorn outpost. The boom town was shaping up back along the Missouri River, and it required spring weather to start rolling westward.

All through the fall and winter months small samples of gold had been reaching the Missouri Valley towns. Some of the early Pike's Peakers folded a pinch of dust into the letters they sent home. Quills filled with specks of float gold appeared on the streets and in the saloons of

Nebraska, Kansas, and Missouri villages. Pink S., whose roving eye spotted the beginnings of Denver's *demimonde*, sent his sweetheart in Ohio a specimen of dust, enough to plate a child's finger ring. "Just one dol worth I took it from a few pans dirt a few days ago while trying my hand washing," he wrote.³

From his winter-quarters ranch on the Platte, Sam S. Curtis sent thirty-seven and a half cents worth of Cherry Creek gold "in its native purity" to his brother, S. R. Curtis, then representing Iowa in Congress. The Council Bluffs *Bugle* reported that it had seen twenty dollars in dust brought back by a Mr. Ritchman, and W. R. Reed sent a twelve-fifty sample home with a friend. Both reports were republished in William N. Byers' guidebook for prospective emigrants, whose numbers grew as the season advanced.⁴ William McKimens dispatched a small sample to the editor of the *Leavenworth Times* down in Kansas,⁵ and the *Times* also reported a fifty-dollar nugget. All of these accounts found their way into Byers' guide, along with an even more auspicious finding of quartz gold and articles at varying degrees of rising pitch from the *Omaha Republican*, *Omaha Times*, *Missouri Democrat*, *Kansas Weekly Press* (which heralded a kettle of dust valued at seven thousand dollars), *Council Bluffs Nonpareil*, *St. Louis Democrat*, *Nebraska News* and other papers.

The excitement in the Western press reached such a level that in New York the *Ledger* felt called upon to admonish its readers on January 1:

We see many innocent-looking paragraphs in the newspapers now-a-days, which inform the public that a new gold mine has just been discovered here, or there, or elsewhere, from which the finder took ever so many dollars' worth of ore in a few days. These are simply preparatory baits wherewith sharpers hope to catch gudgeons. Our readers must be careful how they embark in gold-mining-company speculations.

The gold-rush handbook published by Byers with Jno. H. Kellom, superintendent of public instruction for Nebraska Territory, was only one of fifteen sped into print during the winter.⁶ The Byers and Kellom book, printed in Chicago, was calmer than most of the others and, since it drew on Byers' personal experience over the road to Oregon,

³Pink S. to Maggie Kirk, ms. letter.

⁴Byers and Kellom, *Hand Book to the Gold Fields of Nebraska and Kansas* (Denver, 1949 facsimile), pp. 97, 103, 104.

⁵*Leavenworth Times*, Dec. 18, 1858.

⁶A full account of the guidebooks is given in LeRoy R. Hafen, *Pike's Peak Gold Rush Guidebooks of 1859* (Glendale, 1941).

more trail-wise. Some of the guidebooks boldly fanned the flames; Byers and Kellom opened theirs with a disclaimer:

To The Reader

It is not the object of this work to persuade you to go to the recently discovered Nebraska and Kansas Gold Mines, but to lay before you a mass of testimony and information whereby you may be able to make a judicious decision. . . .

But they went on to mention the *Kansas Weekly Press's* kettle of gold and a nugget "*nearly as big as his fist*" which a man had picked up on the Frémont expedition in 1842.

Under such ministrations the mania grew. Thousands of impatient gold miners were poised along the Missouri at Omaha, Plattsmouth, Nebraska City, St. Joseph, Leavenworth, Lawrence, and Westport. January dawdled into February, and February perversely lingered. In March, despite a late and unusually wet season which left the plains a bogland, human patience could no longer endure delay. The floodgates burst. The stampede to Pike's Peak was on.

The expedition to found the *Rocky Mountain News* might have taken to the field even earlier had it not been for an accident. In September, Byers' lifelong talent for getting himself mixed up in shootings nearly cost his life. He had been passing through Omaha's "Irish Town" on a Sunday afternoon. A German immigrant had just located there and was being initiated with a thrashing by a mob of about a hundred bully boys. Byers and David H. Moffat, Jr., later to become one of Denver's wealthiest men and leave his name behind on a railroad tunnel piercing the Continental Divide, tried to break up the party and harvested rue for their pains. The German sought refuge in his shanty, and Moffat and Byers were standing by its door, the future editor holding a saber he had seized from one of the Irishmen. Suddenly the door swung open. A shotgun was discharged at the crowd. The buckshot ripped into Byers' right shoulder. He went down with a wound thought at the time to be fatal. He recovered, but his plans for the *News* were delayed.

Chauncey Thomas, Byers' nephew, wrote in 1934 that the shotgun blast "tore out Byers' collarbone" and left him severely incapacitated for many months. "In fact," Thomas said, "for the rest of his life he would not use suspenders, always used a belt." If the wound permanently handicapped Byers, he did not let it interfere with a full and active life which included mountain climbing, Indian chasing, lumbering, and other rigorous pursuits.

As he recovered from the injury Byers gathered together his press outfit and made ready to join the spring rush. The decision to move on west from Omaha was Mrs. Byers', according to Chauncey Thomas, who unfortunately romanticized the Colorado pioneers elaborately and is not

an altogether reliable source. Thomas also gives the only account which has been located of the naming of the *News*. Again he credited his aunt Elizabeth:

. . . The founders wanted to call it either the Cherry Creek Express or the Pikes Peak Herald because in those days there was no such thing as Denver and no such thing as Colorado. The names hadn't been heard of yet. The people who were interested in founding the newspaper were discussing the name and Mrs. Byers suggested, "Let's name it the Rocky Mountain News." Her suggestion was adopted and so the paper got its name.⁷

So far as is known, Byers himself never explained the name choice, but it is well established that the paper had its name before it left Omaha.

Associated with Byers in the publishing venture were Thomas Gibson of Fontanelle, Nebraska Territory, a "somewhat cranky cockney Englishman" who had published the *Quincy Whig* in southern Illinois, and Dr. Gilbert C. Monell of Omaha, owner-editor of the *Nebraska Republican* there and later candidate for territorial representative in Congress. Together they formed Wm. N. Byers & Company, a three-way partnership. John L. Dailey, a skilled printer with a wealth of experience on frontier papers in Iowa and Nebraska, joined the group as printing foreman. Dailey had quit a job and come down to Omaha in response to a letter from Byers and apparently was under the impression he was to be a partner in the enterprise. When he got there, however, he found the company already formed, and he did not achieve partnership status with Byers until later.

Byers & Company had something lacked by most of the tramp-printer outfits of the day with their highly portable presses and their aprons of types. The partners had capital. Not much, but enough to meet the initial costs with a little margin to finance the first few issues. How much money they had, and where it came from, is not clear. None of the three men had much to spare; all three were hopeful frontier followers. They had sold considerable advertising in advance to Omaha merchants who were doing a lively business as outfitters of parties bound for the new El Dorado, and they probably pooled their own resources. Some help may have come from the family of Mrs. Byers. She was a granddaughter of Robert Lucas, who had been governor of Ohio and later the first territorial governor of Iowa. Her father, Colonel Horatio N. Sumner of West Liberty, Iowa, was a man of means.

Whether or not Colonel Sumner backed the expedition out of pocket, he did supply some of the motive power. He sent two teams of horses to help draw the press wagons across the prairie. He also dispatched four of his sons from West Liberty to Omaha. Edward C., usually known as

⁷*Rocky Mountain News*, Aug. 1, 1926.

Charles, remained with his sister Elizabeth in Omaha. Jack, Will, and Robert became members of the party and put their strong young shoulders to the wheel to help empire along on its westward course.

On March 8, 1859, the *Rocky Mountain News* hoisted sail for Pike's Peak.

The departure was not unobserved. The partners were men of prominence in Omaha, the formation of their company was common knowledge, and the Missouri River frontier was watching with interest to see if they could make good on their declared intention of taking a public press to the far Rockies. The Omaha newspapers gave their prospective colleague a send-off with notices on March 9.

Said the *Nebraskian*:

Rocky Mt. News:

The press, type and other "fixings" pertaining to the above-named establishment, started for Fort Laramie yesterday, accompanied by several gentlemen from this city, under the charge and command of Capt. W. N. Byers—Success to the enterprise.

The *Republican* headlined its item "A Pikes Peak Paper":

A train of wagons, taking out the press, etc. of The Rocky Mountain News, left town yesterday for the gold regions, with a large party, all in the best of spirits, with banners flying, W. N. Byers in command.

"There goes Westward the March of Empire!" We shall soon gladly welcome The News to our exchange list. Success to the enterprise, for it is deserved.

Even the distant New York *Tribune* took note, little anticipating that within a few months the big boss himself, Horace Greeley, would be making news by way of the infant *Rocky Mountain News*. On March 19 the *Tribune* published a letter from Omaha City dated February 28:

A company of persons from this city will start this week with a press and materials for printing a newspaper to be called the Rocky Mountain News at Fort Laramie or some other suitable point in or near the mining region. The first number is expected to be issued about the first of April.

The Chicago *Press and Tribune* copied on March 21 the item from the Omaha *Republican* of March 9. Few unpublished weekly newspapers have received so lavish a coverage of their good intentions. But if the "press" was good, other omens didn't measure up. The News was having trouble before it had traveled a quarter of a mile.

The spring was a wet one, and the thaw had turned the black gumbo of eastern Nebraska into a sea of tar. The News wagon promptly bogged

down in the muddy streets of Omaha. "Twice before we got well out of Omaha we had to unload part of the heavier pieces, such as the press and stones, to give the oxen a chance to pull out," John Dailey recalled. For nearly half the journey ahead the party would battle mud and high water.

When Alfred Sorensen wrote his *Early History of Omaha* some years later he remembered the inauspicious departure. "On the side of his wagon he [Byers] had printed the name of his contemplated newspaper, 'The Rocky Mountain News'. . . ."⁸ So there actually was a banner flying, though it may have been somewhat spattered with mud.

The press wagon was not alone in its struggle with mushy roads and trails, late snows and sheets of icy rain. Not even the weather slowed the rush, and the trails bore a heavy traffic. Travelers at that season have recorded that they made the entire trip from the Missouri to Cherry Creek without once being out of sight of fellow pilgrims. The argonauts traveled on foot and by horseback, in wagons, buggies, and sulkies, or trudged along pushing handcarts or wheelbarrows. One outfit moved westward with the multitude behind a small cart drawn by a team of dogs. Another, having lost one ox to Indian thieves or exhaustion, yoked the remaining animal with a mule for the rest of a journey, which must have been a difficult one for the teamster. The *Daily Missouri Republican* for April 20, 1859, reports an even more exotic mode of transportation:

The affair is on wheels which are mammoth concerns, about twenty feet in circumference, and the arrangement for passengers is built somewhat after the style of an omnibus-body. It is to be propelled by the wind, through the means of sails. As to the wheels, it looks like an overgrown omnibus; and as to the spars and sails, it looks like a diminutive schooner. It will seat about twenty-four passengers . . . the Prairie Ship, or wind wagon, is to ply between Westport and Pike's Peak as a regular passenger vessel. The inventor [a Mr. Thomas] proposes to make the trip to Pike's Peak and back in twelve days and travel an average of over 100 miles per day.

The Prairie Ship came to early grief in an eastern Kansas gully, although one of less ambitious dimensions later made it through. The *News* reported on April 18, 1860, the arrival "from the States" of a "combined wind wagon and hand car." Three men had piloted the craft from the Missouri in twenty days, "equalling the speed of horse teams with but a tithe part of the expense."

Still later another fantastic vessel which embarked on the Great American Desert sought to harness steam for the crossing. The "Prairie Motor" consisted of a large boiler which was to power enormous iron-cleated

⁸Alfred Sorensen, *The Early History of Omaha* (Omaha, 1876), p. 97.

wheels and drag behind it a whole train of emigrant wagons. It made nine miles in 1862 and then mired down of its own weight, and the boiler ended its days providing steam for a small Nebraska village.

The standard outfit was one or more yokes of oxen. They were slow but rugged, better even than mules and much more durable than draft horses. Behind the oxen rolled the much-pictured prairie schooner, familiar symbol of American pioneering. A full-rigged schooner carried a cover of white canvas or drill stretched over supporting bows, and on this cover many others besides the *News* chalked ebullient notices or bold advertisements.

The standard wagon slogan, of course, was "Pike's Peak or Bust!" But some of the emigrants rang changes on this theme. One determined man with an artistic flair painted a sharp peak piercing the clouds and labeled it "I'll Get There." An Ohio wagon picked up words from a song popular in the panic of '57, "Root, Hog, or Die." A schooner drawn by six milch cows was on a pay-as-you-go basis: "Family Express—Milk for Sale." Several wagons announced: "Old Bourbon Whiskey Sold Here." Some of the other recorded slogans: "This out Fitt for sail," "Good-bye, Friends, I am Bound for the Peak," "I Am Off for the Peak—Are You?" "Jordan Am a Hard Road to Travel," and a belligerent "The Eleventh Commandment—Mind Your Own Business."

All the nautical language and imagery was particularly appropriate for the emigrants who, like the *News*, began their trip in spring-flooded eastern Nebraska. The *News* outfit made only eight miles through the mud on its first day, and editor Byers later set down some of the difficulties encountered:

On the third day after crossing Elkhorn River on a military bridge we broke the ice and traversed for two miles a sheet of water from one to four feet deep. Streams were all flooded, and mud bottomless, snow and rain storms frequent, and it was the last day of March when the caravan reached Fort Kearney, one hundred and eighty-five miles from Omaha. . . .⁹

The *News* expedition was divided, military style, into two platoons. There were two wagons. One, drawn by the Sumner horses, Byers in command, led the way. John Dailey brought up the rear in charge of four plodding oxen dragging the second wagon, which carried the heavier items of printing equipment. Along with Byers in the lead party traveled his brother-in-law, Robert Sumner, and Copeland Rabe, Irwin Sansom, and the lanky Dr. A. F. Peck with his grisly bankroll, or what was left of it after the outfitting. Gibson, Will and Jack Sumner, and others traveled with Dailey. Dr. Monell remained behind to obtain additional paper supplies and follow later.

⁹Byers, "Early Journalism in Colorado," *Magazine of Western History*, p. 692.

Byers kept a sketchy diary—principally concerned with the weather and daily expenditures—during most of his adult life, but the small vest-pocket books for the interesting years 1855 to 1863 have been lost. Accounts of the trip survive in Byers' reminiscent writings, statements by Copeland Rabe, and the Dailey diaries and other papers.

Rabe, a twenty-two-year-old Iowan, provided fresh meat for the party as its principal hunter of buffalo, antelope, and deer. He lived until 1927 and was the last survivor of the expedition. Rabe remembered in 1902 that "hundreds of wagons, handcarts and horsemen were in sight almost every day, and good camping places were hard to find."¹⁰ So heavy was the noisy emigration that game was scarce within range of the trail, and the prairie grass was trampled down by the passing of thousands of hoofs. "Miles of the country were dismal stretches of mud," Dailey recalled.

. . . We had no end of trouble with the mud until after we passed Fort Kearney. We were six weeks on the way. When we reached Elkhorn creek we found ourselves contending with troublesome high waters. All the creek's bottoms were overflowing. We traveled watery ways for many miles. Finally, we came to a gulch we could not ford. Felling trees across it where we could, we used these improvised bridges for carrying over every light thing in our outfit.

After that we made our oxen swim across the swelling torrent, and attaching our wagons, stones and press, together with all the heavier articles of our outfit, to ropes to which we hitched our oxen, we dragged them across the flood. Of course many of our chattels were wet. I think our printing press particularly resented the bath, for it accumulated considerable rust as a result of the experience. However, it was that method or wait several days, and neither Byers nor myself cared to sit in a drowning wilderness to wait for an uncertain turn of the flood. . . .

Our press worked all right after all and both Byers and myself have always kept pieces of it as souvenirs. . . .¹¹

Dailey's diary for 1859 contains brief day-by-day notes of the crossing. On March 12 he recorded that the water had been "knee deep over a large portion" of the day's travel to reach Elkhorn River. On the thirteenth it snowed. By the seventeenth the wagons were at Columbus on the Loup Fork, where the spring floods had washed out the derrick of the ferry, delaying the party for several days. On Sunday, March 20, Dailey notes that he "Attended religious services at Mr. Case's tent. Discourse read by Dr. Peck."

The press got its bath at Prairie Creek on March 22, and two days later the wagons had to be unloaded again to get through a slough. Four yoke of oxen strayed off, and the Dailey wagon again was delayed.

¹⁰*Rocky Mountain News*, Sept. 21, 1902.

¹¹Undated clipping [1903], Dailey scrapbook, Denver Public Library.

Byers and the rest pushed on to Woodriver Camp. Other excerpts from the Dailey diary:

March 30—Following most of the way the old California trail. Marks of which are plainly seen.

April 2—Met a train of 20 wagons from Santa Fe via the gold mines, which had brought out provisions from New Mexico to the mines and were on their way to St. Louis for goods. Teamsters mostly Mexicans. (More snow today.)

April 3—Baked up a mess of bread for the next 200 miles of our journey which is represented to be utterly destitute of timber.

April 8—Passed 2 lodges of Cheyenne Indians in the afternoon, the first we have seen. They were very hungry and willingly exchanged a pair of moccasins for a couple of cups of meal.

April 10—It was discovered that the prairie was on fire above us and the fire fast coming down upon us, and orders were given to pull up stakes and leave, which was done with dispatch.

April 11—A mule, horse & hand cart train passed us this morning.

April 14—Today we had the first sight of the Rocky mountains, which now loom up magnificently before us. Gibsons off ox gave out today.

Beyond Fort Kearney, as Dailey's journal indicates, the party's troubles changed from wet to dry ones. Rabe mentions that buffalo chips were the only fuel to be found, dust "blew in clouds," and alkali filled the throats of the travelers. Forage for the horses and oxen was scarce, and good water a problem. Byers' earlier overland diary of 1852 indicates he had an antidote for bad alkali water. He noted: "A little acetic, nitric or tartaric acid destroys the poisonous qualities of alkaline water and renders it wholesome."

At Fort Kearney, established on the lower Platte in 1848 to protect the Oregon, Mormon, and California migrations, the commanding officer turned out the garrison on March 30 in salute to the westbound printing press. Editor Byers returned the courtesy in the first issue of his *News*:

THANKS.—It is with feelings of pleasure we acknowledge our obligations to the army officers stationed at Fort Kearney for the many courtesies shown us upon the occasion of the general drill and inspection at that post on the last day of March.

Every thing was in apple pie order and neat as a pin as it always is at that post.

Neither the press nor any of the other emigrants along the Platte Valley route had need for the protection of the Kearney troopers. Indians were encountered but they were by no means as hostile as their fearsome reputations. Later, pioneer gaffers would spin the wildest sorts of bloody scalping yarns until it would seem that the gold rush had made its way west on trails paved with the bodies of dead redskins. There were a few

depredations, savage and nasty, along the Smoky Hill Trail, which struck out across western Kansas approximately midway between the Platte and the Santa Fe Trail, but the northern route that season was quiet so far as Indians were concerned. As was their custom, they did a little thieving of livestock, and they annoyed many pilgrims with their begging and the hangdog way they would linger, silent and impassive, in the outer shadows of a campfire's ring of light. They had also complicated the forage problem by burning off large areas of grass west of Fort Kearney in their efforts to scare up game.

If the Indians caused little trouble, there were other hazards which did not depend on a lively imagination: distance, drouth, starvation. A passage of five to six hundred miles measured up to exhaustion for men and animals at the slow pace of eight, ten, fifteen miles a day. Potable water was scarce through at least the western half of the journey, and the shortage was particularly acute on the Smoky Hill route. Along that roadway a wagon might travel a week or more between "sweetwater" holes.

For many of the ill-financed, ill-equipped parties starvation was a daily threat. The rush brought all kinds of people out onto the trails. Most of them were tenderfeet, and nearly all of them had suffered privations when the state banks crashed and carried the nation's economy down with them in the depression of 1857. Whether through ignorance, reckless buoyancy, or simple lack of funds, many of the Pike's Peakers headed west with insufficient provisions to carry them through forty days or more of rigorous travel in an inhospitable land. Friendly Indians found and fed some of the starving argonauts. Others were sustained by trains better supplied with corn meal, flour, and salt pork. Still others had it rougher.

One woman, who was back home in Elkhorn City, Nebraska Territory, by May, told of what she had seen in a letter to her sister:

. . . Oh Ann you [have] no idea what I have suffered—I was taken with the Ague before we [left] Columbus had to be carried on a bed six days—sleeping on the ground—rained in on to us—cold—snowed—besides almost starved to death—the meanest company I ever was in—Oh the suffering that I have seen—men starving—one man that went out with Capt. Parks son from Omaha went eight [days] without eating anything but a snake that he killed and cooked—Walker killed a buffalo—no one else killed anything—so we had some meat to eat. We camped among the Cheyane Indians four days and the Sioux—they are very tall. Tried to steal the baby—one of their chiefs offered any amount of gold for her. I never left the tent—he came after dark—Walker was away to their war dance—they killed fifteen pawnees the day before and had their scalps hanging on their belt—fresh from their heads—they were fasened on a little hoop to dry—one walked into my tent held one up before my face—as I was saying he came to my tent after

dark—I called the guard—the next morning he came with his squaw—she had lost her Pappoose—he wanted I should let her nurse the baby—wanted to take her—I let him—he turned around and walked out of the tent away on to the bluffs—20 rods off—with her in his arms—I screamed—he finally brot her back . . . we met one thousand people in one day coming back and hundreds of beggars—hundreds starved to death—22 in one spot laid by the road side dead on the Smoky hill route. . . . All our furniture is gone. . . . I (and all the rest) went a great many days without anything but a little piece of bread made of flour and oatmeal mixed together. . . .¹²

Early in May a haggard man stumbled into Russellville at the head of Cherry Creek and reported that his nine starving companions had given up and stretched themselves out on the prairie, not far away, to die. A relief party was sent out and found one man dead and two others so far gone they died after they were brought in. A few days later thirteen men arrived over the Smoky Hill Trail carrying their goods on their backs; they had eaten their pack horse. Two other footmen came in after subsisting for nine days on prickly pears and a hawk. Another report told of nine "tottering skeletons" who reached Fort St. Vrain. "They stated they had not tasted bread for more than 10 days, part of which time they had lived upon the flesh of a dead ox, which they found upon the prairie, but partially devoured by wolves, and for 4 days they had nothing but roots. They stated they had traveled more than 100 miles without finding water, and must have perished of thirst but for some snow squalls that occurred."¹³

There were many more such accounts, but the story which chilled all spines told of the fate of the Blue brothers. One of them was found wandering the plains hollow-eyed and raving. The third issue of the *News*, May 14, 1859, told why:

Mr. Williams, Conductor of the Express, informs us that he picked up on the plains, a man in the last stages of exhaustion, who had subsisted upon the remains of his two brothers, who had died of starvation. Three brothers set out from Illinois for the Gold regions. From Kansas City they took the Smoky Hill Route—found the distance much greater than represented, ate up their provisions, and when near to death, one of them sinking more rapidly than the others, requested them to live upon his flesh, and try to get through. He died and they commenced their horrible feast—ate the body and again braved starvation—another died and the survivor lived upon his remains, but the same fate had almost reached him, when he was found by an Indian—carried to his lodge and fed, the next day the Express came along and took him in

¹²Amalia Simons Nichols to Ann Kilbourne, May 1859; quoted in Philip W. Whiteley, "A Pioneer Story in Western Cover," *Denver Westerners' Brand Book*: 1956 (Denver, 1955), pp. 294-96.

¹³*Rocky Mountain News*, May 7, 1859.

and brought him part way through but was obliged to leave him because of his feebleness and delirium. He will be brought up by the next coach and probably arrive today.

Mr. Williams, after learning the man's story from himself and the Indian, searched for, and found the bones of the second one who died, and interred them.

This we fear is one of a hundred tales of horror, yet to be told of the Smoky Hill Route—which will bring sorrow to many a hearthstone.

Emigrants who started too early in the year froze hands and feet along the way. Those who set out too late found grass and water gone, and some wagons creaked into the Cherry Creek settlements behind gaunt oxen which had been fed on flour for the last three hundred miles. "Getting to the gold" was no lark, and the company one met on the trail wasn't very good, either. Others shared Amalia Nichols' opinion that some of the Pike's Peakers were about the "meanest" men ever encountered. Copeland Rabe of the *News* party did, for one. He said the press expedition sometimes camped at night with other emigrants, but

. . . There were times, however, when the Byers party preferred to take chances against redskin raids rather than camp with some of the white travelers they met. Some of the pioneers were of the hardboiled variety, it seems, and suspected of being not above a bit of brigandage to fatten their lean pocketbooks.¹⁴

Amid these companions and scenes the press ground out slow miles toward its promised land. West of Fort Kearney, in drier climate and sandier soil, the road got better and progress was faster. Spirits revived when, at last, the Rocky Mountains could be seen, as Zebulon Pike had seen them, like clouds on the far horizon. The wagons forded the Platte and followed up its south fork, bearing off toward the southwest with the Rockies now constantly in view on the right hand. The Platte was a clearer, colder stream now, and had dwindled in size.

On April 17 the party came finally to Fort St. Vrain, which Dailey described as "the ruins of an adobe building about 100 feet long & 80 wide." The expedition paused here where there was good water and wood to regroup and replenish—and to begin the hunt for gold. Dailey's diary reports for the eighteenth: "A party from our company are making preparations to start on a prospecting tour up the Cache a la Poudre river & Thompson's Fork tomorrow. Saw returning gold seekers today who give very discouraging reports. Byers started on horseback for Cherry Creek to make arrangements to establish his press."

Some of the men remained behind to continue their prospecting when Byers' message arrived two days later ordering that the press be brought

¹⁴*Rocky Mountain News*, June 5, 1927.

on as fast as the oxen could travel. The end of the long road was in sight. Teams were hitched, and after dark on April 20 they plodded into the Cherry Creek settlements. Byers met his crew and directed them to the Wootton building on the Auraria side. But in fording the sandy trickle of a creek the heavy press wagon ended its trip as it had started it—bogged down. The equipment was unloaded and carried several hundred yards to the Wootton attic. It was late night when at last the durable old Imperial was assembled and set in its place. The Rockies now had their first printing press, and Dailey's diary for the next day says:

“Went to work early on the ‘Rocky Mountain News.’”

CHAPTER FOUR

Gobacks and Greeley

THE round little German scurried about Council Bluffs picking up empty meal bags from millers, stores, and housewives. He had more than twenty of them, each large enough to hold a hundred pounds or more of corn meal, stacked neatly in a tired cart drawn by a pair of venerable, sag-eared mules.

"What're you going to do with all them bags?" he was asked.

"Take 'em to Pike's Peak and fill 'em with gold," he replied.

"Ha," said the skeptics.

"Oh yes, I will," the German insisted, "even if I have to stay there till fall."

The incident is somewhat typical.¹

Many, if not most, of the argonauts of '59 were about like the sanguine German in Council Bluffs. Their hopes were towering, and they weren't quite sure about gold except that it was yellow, desirable, and to be had at Pike's Peak. The consequences were about as could be expected.

Of the 150,000 persons who, with the *News*, swept out on the plains that spring and summer, at least a third didn't reach the spot where the end of the rainbow was guaranteed to be. They were turned back along the way by the angry words "Hoax!" and "Humbug!" The road home was strewn with abandoned mining equipment and bitter with remnants of shattered dream castles. The shining mountains took on a tarnish.

The whole of the expansive new population of the Pike's Peak country might have left as abruptly as it came, had it not been for three things: palpable gold in coinable quantity, the high regard in which the name Horace Greeley was held, and a four-column newspaper printed on one side of scraps of brown wrapping paper.

As the flood of emigration swept up to Cherry Creek, wavered, and began to ebb, authentic bonanzas were shaping up in the mountains thirty miles to the west. And down in eastern Kansas the white linen duster of Horace Greeley had been seen passing through on a westbound

¹It is told by Ovando J. Hollister in *The Mines of Colorado* (Springfield, 1867), p. 9fn.

heading. The press was on the ground, ready to bring the two—gold and Greeley—together. With his fussily flapping coattails, under-the-chin whiskers, and oval spectacles, Greeley didn't much look the part, but he was riding into the West as the savior of a municipal infant in distress. Had he known it, he would have relished the role even more than he did later in retrospect.

After all, he had an almost paternal interest in this country he was seeing for the first time. He and his *New York Tribune* for years had been counseling young men to leave the growing cities of the eastern seaboard and seek opportunity in the fresh and open agricultural lands of the West. Out there, the famous editor assured ambitious youth, a man could win his way by temperance and hard work and be his own master. Born on a New Hampshire farm rich in gravel and granite, Greeley always mistrusted cities, and his own New York more than any. At the height of his power and prestige as oracle of the *Tribune*, when "Greeley says—" was enough to end any argument, the great man was slipping off in spare moments to his waterlogged farm in Westchester County outside Chappaqua to drop seeds in the ground and marvel at their growth. At the New York State Fair of 1854 he proudly claimed second honors, and two dollars, for prize turnips grown in "Greeley's Bog."² Chappaqua cost him a small fortune, but he never relaxed his dogged insistence that farming was man's only true way of life. There was farm land to be claimed out west; *ergo*, young men should go there.

Greeley, however, did not invent the admonition, "Go west, young man," although nearly everyone has credited it to him. The sentence first was used by John Babson Lane Soule in the *Terre Haute, Indiana, Express* in 1851. Greeley's *Tribune* reprinted Soule's article with full credit, and the editor found its agrarian sentiments much to his liking. He wrote an editorial about it and later retailed the advice widely to all who would listen. Now, in the spring of 1859, Greeley was following his own advice and touring out to see how an even triter phrase—"manifest destiny"—was getting on with the job of filling up the continent.

It was nip and tuck in the case of newborn Denver. In the rutted lanes, alternately muddy or dusty, between the sod-roofed cabins, newly arrived men and animals brawled and seethed. But the reverse tide already had set in, and though the settlement floundered in a Rotarian's dream of new-won population, the future hung poised in the angry uncertainties of men who were not finding what they came for. Few had come in the poetic spirit of the bounteous earth that Greeley hymned. Most of them knew more than he did about the fickle tantrums Mother Nature sometimes threw, and how it cost brow sweat and calluses to win from her a few bushels of oats and a little corn that wasn't worth much

²William Harlan Hale, *Horace Greeley: Voice of the People* (New York, 1950), pp. 177-78.

when hauled into town. It was precisely that sort of honest, God-fearing toil they had sought to escape by becoming rich on Pike's Peak gold. Only now they discovered that shoveling gravel into a sluice box was just as hard work as pitching hay, and no more profitable. Moreover, all the likely-looking placers already were claimed by men who carried rifles as well as picks. So what now? Brand the whole thing a hoax and head home to the I-told-you-so's of less adventurous neighbors? Or push on up into the hills and see if day wages could be dug?

The atmosphere was tense with indecision and disillusionment, and in such a climate the new journal of the Pike's Peak region tried to hold to a calm and sober middle course. The *Rocky Mountain News* was dedicated to "The Mines and Miners of Kansas and Nebraska," and it reported and speculated on all the new strikes. But it also extolled the virtues, moral and material, of agriculture in terms which could have come right out of Greeley's *Tribune*. It offered garden seeds at twenty-five cents a packet to a country where there were few plows and almost no dedicated plow hands. The editor—after prudently staking out a farm in the Platte bottoms a few miles upstream, about where West Alameda Avenue now crosses the river—was himself making prospecting forays into the mountains between editions. He was reporting on the mining camps for the paper, but he also was courting his own yellow witch. Even hard-working John Dailey deserted his cases and press for short-term flings at fortune hunting.

During April and most of May the outlook was bleak. Despite the massive emigration the prospect seemed to be excellent that Denver would have fewer inhabitants by the end of the summer than it had had a year earlier. When the *News* arrived the rush was just past its crest. Something had to be done or the new "empire in the sisterhood of empires" wouldn't survive its birth. Byers got out his plain-talking pen:

THE RETURNING EMIGRATION.

Recent arrivals from the East report a larger travel toward the States than in this direction.

All this has been brought about by the action of a few restless spirits who are of no advantage to any country. They arrive in the vicinity of the mining region, stop a few hours or a day or two, perhaps prospect a little in places the most unlikely in the world for finding gold, and, because they cannot shovel out nuggets like they have been accustomed to dig potatoes, they raise the cry that it is all a humbug, that there is no gold in the country, and take the back track for home where it is to be hoped they will ever after remain . . . the contagion spreads as it travels, each man tells the worst story he can and it gains strength as it passes from mouth to mouth until the column of emigrants which a few days since was moving so steadily towards the west, wavers in its march, then falters, and hundreds turn their faces toward the east, to travel

over again the same weary road without having reached the land of their hopes and bright dreams. . . .

We do not wish our readers to think that we endorse all the extravagant stories that have been written respecting the gold mines of this region, many we admit are much over-colored, but that does not palliate in any degree the great harm which is now being done by the class of persons of whom we now write. We have in our mind one particular individual who left Cherry Creek just one week ago. At Fort St. Vrain he told that he had prospected for three days and that the mines were a perfect humbug, that in three days these flourishing towns would be heaps of smoking ruins, that the old settlers would be hung, that some had already fled to save their lives. This story he repeated to every train he met each time increasing the horrors and his lies, which from the first were as false as his own black heart. . . .

. . . And we predict that before six months have passed away hundreds who are wending their way towards the states will be again as anxious as ever before to visit the Gold mines of the South Platte.

We have but just arrived, three days ago we were wending our way over the dusty road bound for Cherry Creek; we became imbued with the same feeling which seemed to pervade the whole emigration on the latter part of the route, we had met the croaking birds of evil omen, and acknowledge that their stories had their intended effect to a certain extent, but we had set out determined to see for ourself, and see we did—upon our arrival we accompanied a friend to prospect on our own account—our first effort was less than half a mile from where we now sit, the result was over twenty cents to two pans of earth. We proceeded some two miles further up the Platte and prospected in various places, finding gold in *every* pan, varying in amount from one and a half to ten cents to the pan. . . . Miners are at work all along and making about two dollars per day to the man. . . .³

Byers went on to caution emigrants to bring their own tools and provisions for at least three months. Picks and shovels and gold pans were "scarce and difficult to obtain," and food supplies were not available for "fifty or even ten thousand people."

When Byers arrived in advance of his press on April 17, the first major movement in the reverse rush was one day old. He wrote later that the turnabout may have been triggered by Denver's second killing (the victim of the first was only nine days in his grave). On the sixteenth John Scudder had killed Captain P. T. Bassett, who, it was alleged, sought to use a pick handle to enforce his position in an argument over town lots. Bassett was a member of the Denver City Town Company, and Scudder had succeeded "Uncle John" Smith as its treasurer. The initial number of the *News* told of the homicide under the headline "Shooting Affair." The report said Scudder "immediately gave himself up to the authorities and a man named Carroll Wood was arrested as an accomplice, but

³*Rocky Mountain News*, Apr. 23, 1859.

through the connivance of some of their friends, they succeeded in making their escape before any examination could be held, and escaped the country." Carroll Wood will re-enter this story later. Scudder returned to Denver in 1860, demanded a trial, and was acquitted by a "People's Court." He became a substantial citizen and survived into the twentieth century.

Byers felt the Scudder-Bassett affair might have contributed to the exodus, but the real cause was "disappointment in not finding gold here." "If that killing had any effect," he wrote, ". . . it was simply to dissatisfy those who saw it. . . . They thought there might be a series of outlawry & became panicky." The comments are part of the recollections Byers set down in 1884 for Hubert H. Bancroft:

. . . What we called a stampede took place. The first who reached here in the spring were disappointed. There had been no discovery of gold to amount to anything. No gold had been discovered in the mountains, & only experienced miners were satisfied there was gold in the mountains reasoning from the fact that there was gold in the alluvial deposits along the streams. The great majority of people having had no experience were easily discouraged. They found nothing to do, had no possible resource to rely upon & as is very often the case among large numbers of people they became infected with a kind of panic . . . they started back across the plains & turned back all they could on the plains. It started from here on the 16th of April 1859 . . . the first crowd were on foot having no teams or means of transportation.

Probably 60 or 70 started out on the 16th down the Road & turned back every one they could. They told very exaggerated stories about the conditions of things here & what was going to be done. They became very much embittered against a few men who had spoken well of the country & who they charged had induced people to come here without good reason for doing so.

The man they abused most was Henry Allen [a leader in the Auraria Town Company], the next most prominent perhaps was General William Larimer [of the Denver City Town Company], & I suppose I came in for the next share of abuse. . . . I had incurred ill will because I had published in the winter of 1858 a Guide Book for emigrants crossing the Plains. . . . It had no exaggerated stories though some were bright perhaps. . . .⁴

Byers soon had reports from down the road that he and other authors of the gold-rush guidebooks were being hanged in effigy by the disappointed men now back-trailing home with empty pockets. At one place along the South Platte road his name was inscribed on the buffalo-skull tombstone of a freshly mounded grave, and a popular couplet among the humbuggers was:

⁴Byers, Bancroft ms.

Hang Byers and D. C. Oakes⁵

For starting this damned Pike's Peak hoax.

A letter written in 1859 by a Nebraska woman who was on the plains in the midst of the rush, both ways, indicates clearly both the mood of violent despondency and the pitiful condition of many of the emigrants:

. . . their is nobody in Cherry Creek—we met one thousand people in one day coming back and hundreds of beggars—hundreds starved to death—22 in one spot laid by the road side dead on the Smoky hill route. They shot Bassed one of their leaders that reported the stories about the gold—the rest fled—Dr. Peck and all of his company have returned—Byers is hid. We met one day over two hundred men heard that Steinberger was behind us—said they should hang him—They had him hid in one of the waygons—In regard to gold there is gold there but not in large quantities—very small particles—may be discovered in the mountains in larger quantities. This excitement was gotten up by these men that were speculating in town property—thousands ruined—you can have no idea of the immense emigration. . . .⁶

Slogans on the covered wagons, so proudly flaunted a few weeks earlier, now sang a sadder tune. To "Pike's Peak or Bust" was added "Busted by Thunder!" Another wagon rolled back through Jefferson, Missouri, bearing the legend, "Oh Yes! Pike's Peak in H—I and D—nnation!" A third, possibly driven by the same artistic fellow who had drawn the peak on his wagon cover for the outbound trip, reached the Missouri bearing a sketch of an elephant and the caption, "What We Saw at Pike's Peak."

The Missouri border newspapers reported the daily arrival of downhearted and starving "Pikers." The papers now picked up the "humbug" refrain as loudly as they had sung the "Hoi for Pike's Peak" marching music during the winter. Taking a deep breath, the *Hannibal Messenger* said on June 9:

This has been, not inaptly styled, the age of humbugs, and Pike's Peak has indeed proven the humbug of humbugs. It has no parallel in the history of civilized nations. . . . The spectacle of 100,000 people simultaneously abandoning all the comforts, conveniences and endearments of home, and setting out, many of them on foot, and without a dollar in their pockets, and with barely provisions to last them a week, upon a journey from five hundred to a thousand miles, over a wild and

⁵Oakes had co-authored with H. J. Graham and George Pancoast for the Chicago, Burlington & Quincy Railroad the 16-page *Traveler's Guide to the New Gold Mines in Kansas and Nebraska* (New York, 1859), and with S. W. Smith had published *History of the Gold Discoveries on the South Platte River* by Luke Tierney (Pacific City, 1859).

⁶Amalia Simons Nichols to Ann Kilbourne; quoted in Whiteley, *op. cit.*, p. 295.

inhospitable region, all animated and almost run-mad with gold greed; and then, after a lapse of a few weeks, coming back, begging, starving, cursing, and many of them hopelessly ruined, is one never before witnessed, and one that teaches such a lesson as in our opinion, will prevent repetition of a similar act of folly for a long time to come.

As far away as New York the press was watching the flow and ebb of the Pike's Peak rush with great interest. The significant shifting back and forth of a major block of population seems to have escaped the big-city papers, as it did the border journals, which were too close to the dust to see clearly. But on their lofty plane of disengagement the New York papers were fascinated by the horror of it all. Even so genteel and other-worldly a journal as the weekly *Ledger* carefully paragraphed the wild events of the Far West through 1859. The *Ledger* was primarily concerned with moral elevation, literary nicety, and the evils of drink and tobacco. It published, however, a column of "Current Items" as exotic and bloodthirsty as anything that has appeared in the sensational press of the "yellow" era or since. Most of the *Ledger's* Pike's Peak news was carried under "Current Items."

The *Ledger* on June 11 scrambled its report on the hanging of Byers and Oakes:

A Western Editor who went to Pike's Peak a few months ago, writes home to his paper that it is the greatest humbug of the day, and that thousands of men now in that region are suffering indescribably from destitution. A mob of the victims lately hung two men who had been engaged for some months previous in writing glowing accounts of the "diggings" to eastern papers, for which letters they were paid by heartless speculators.

As early as March 5 the *Ledger* had reported that "last news from Pike's Peak is rather disheartening. . . ." By April 9 the existence of "fool's gold" was made known to *Ledger* readers: "A man at Pike's Peak not long since found a large mass of shining stuff which he supposed to be gold, and thereupon put on most consequential airs; but the next day he discovered that it was nothing but a yellow and glittering kind of stone, and humbly went to work again." On April 16 the "rush for Pike's Peak" was "almost beyond belief." "All the river towns of Kansas and Nebraska, and the road from Fort Leavenworth to the 'diggings,' are reported as being full of men on their way to the new 'El Dorado'; and hundreds are said to be literally perishing from hardship and destitution."

On April 23, the same day that the *Rocky Mountain News* appeared, the *Ledger* found that "Many persons who have been to Pike's Peak are declaring in the papers that 'it is one of the most shameful humbugs of the day.' Let everybody with the 'gold fever' take warning."

The same issue tells of a young man named Gadsden, "destitute and disheartened," who blew his brains out with a revolver bullet. The *Ledger* was much concerned about Pike's Peakers who destroyed themselves. On July 9 a man named Wilbrum had taken off by pulling the trigger of his rifle with his toe. On September 17, Theodore Kaughney, "having been ten days without decent sustenance," used a pistol. In each case the same phrase: "blew his brains out."

The violence of these primitive Westerners was fascinating too. The *Ledger* asserted on July 2 that they had lynched the Denver City postmaster for opening letters. (This was the first appearance of the name of the town in the *Ledger* and was a garbled version of a public controversy—no blood let—over handling of mail by the stage company.) Equally titillating to refined Eastern sensibilities was the report on November 12 that

A couple of gamblers at Pike's Peak got into a fight a short time since about the division of their spoil, and drawing their bowie-knives, mangled each other horribly. One had his left eye cut out and his stomach ripped open, and the other's head was nearly severed from his shoulders. Both of them were killed.

Starvation and suffering had "increased to frightful degree" by June 25, and word reached the *Ledger* of September 10 that the Utes were killing miners in the mountains.

In the midst of its reports of "wrecked constitutions" at the diggings the *Ledger* came up with a unique solution to New York's juvenile-delinquency problem. Orphaned and homeless children, an editorial of July 9 suggested, should be deported to the West, which by now must have assumed fearsome proportions indeed in the minds of New Yorkers. "Western hearts are kind and warm," the *Ledger* argued in the face of much evidence to the contrary in its own columns, ". . . and labor, even juvenile labor, is at least worth food and clothing. . . . Necessity cannot tempt to crime in that region of Nature's affluence, and other temptations to transgress the laws are fewer than in the Elder States. . . . Providence seems to smile upon this scheme of providing homes and moral culture in the West, for the uncared-for children of the East. . . . They [children already transported] have found a purer moral atmosphere, and more physical comfort, than they ever experienced before. . . . Push forward the column! Let all who love to aid a holy mission . . . put their shoulders to the wheel. There are multitudes of children this day roaming our streets whose moral salvation depends upon their rescue from the life they are now leading. Transplant them to the West. Here their moral nature is crushed down. There it would have room and opportunity to grow." In an adjoining column one of the *Ledger's* uplifting maxims for the week was: "No day without one act of love."

But if the *Ledger* as an act of love would have banished New York street urchins to a country of bowie knives, suicides, and lynchings, it voiced other sentiments less tender than rational in a May 21 editorial addressed to the Pike's Peak problem. Horace Greeley must have approved as he read:

Probably a hundred thousand would-be Croesuses will be congregated at the new Dorado before midsummer, and it is equally probable that of that number full fifty thousand will devoutly wish they had never heard of it. Fortunes will be made, but not by the gleaners of the gold fields. The bulk of their hard-earned gains will be *sharked* out of them by speculators. But no amount of sad experience seems to damp the enthusiasm of your gold hunter. . . . They will find a tolerably healthy climate⁷ there [at the Nebraskan placers] and *some* gold; but we will venture to say that the average daily earnings of the entire crowd will not be equal to the wages of the same number of ordinary mechanics in any of the Atlantic States, while their expenses will be much heavier. Young men who have been smitten with the Pike's Peak fever, cannot be restrained, we suppose, from rushing in pursuit of this new *mirage*. But we earnestly advise those who are not entirely demented, and have any certain means of support at home, to pause and reflect before they resolve to take the "Kansas-Nebraska slide." Next to war, gold-hunting is the most hazardous of human pursuits, and a large majority of those who embark in it, return like disbanded soldiers from a long campaign, with broken constitutions, ragged wardrobes and empty purses. . . . The moral of the tale is that good husbandry pays better than gold-hunting—that the scythe and cradle is a more remunerative implement than the "cradle" that has no scythe. Young farmers who are anxious to start for Pike's Peak will please for their own sakes, "make a note of this."

Newspapers nearer the frontier used more direct, and sometimes abusive, language. The *Rocky Mountain News* lost patience steadily as the cries of humbug grew more shrill and the exaggerations piled up. After all, the *News* had given in its first issue much the same sort of advice the *Ledger* now was peddling. It had warned constantly of the dangers of crossing the plains ill equipped or euphoric. Editor Byers began dipping his pen in caustic.

When the Franklin, Indiana, *Democrat*—which was in the wrong party anyway—announced that "the Pike's Peak humbug is about exploded once more," the *News* bit back:

"About exploded" is it, Mr. Democrat; well, that is news to us, how did you learn it? or is it only your opinion given to the public for fact?

⁷The *Ledger* noted, apparently with equal lack of firsthand knowledge, on Sept. 3: "There are reported to be over two thousand persons ill with fever and other diseases, in the vicinity of Pike's Peak, and great numbers die every week."

Toot away, blow your horn, show your long ears and see how long you can make the people believe it is a "humbug"—(Ed.)⁸

The Davenport, Iowa, *Gazette* charged that the editor of the *News* "lied his paper black in the face." Byers snapped:

We defy the world to point to one single editorial statement in the *News* which we are unable to substantiate literally as set forth. So pitch in, gentlemen, your abuse is powerless to harm us. . . .

The papers denounce the "Pike's Peak humbug," as they are pleased to call it, basing their opinions in the main upon the lying reports of men who have never seen this region of country—men who have turned back and made their way home howling like whipped curs—creatures who should never have been unloosed from their mothers' apron strings. . . .⁹

Very early in the turnabout migration, on May 14, the *News* sought to scotch some of the reports which later were printed for fact by Mid-western and Eastern papers:

FALSE RUMORS.

We are informed that the returning emigration are giving currency to many absurd and false stories, as they wend their way towards the States; such for instance as that "Denver and Auraria were burned—that all the old citizens were hung or fled the country—that a vigilance committee guarded the road, and whenever an emigrant-wagon approached, it was surrounded and plundered, the cattle or horses killed and the owners compelled to flee for their lives—" all of which are so monstrously and outrageously false, we wonder that people can be found who will believe them.

A month later, on June 18, the *News* boiled over into a short editorial which added a word to the American language.¹⁰

GOBACKS.

We hope that this class are all again safely at home with their Pa's and Ma's, their sweethearts, or "Nancy and the babies"; there they may dwell in sweet seclusion, retirement, and repose, and whilst they sit around the chimney corner they can fight their battles again. . . . Farewell to these "gobacks." They have had their day and soon will be forgotten.

⁸*Rocky Mountain News*, Sept. 10, 1859.

⁹*Ibid.*, Aug. 20, 1859.

¹⁰Mitford M. Mathews, ed., *A Dictionary of Americanisms on Historical Principles* (Chicago, 1951), p. 704.

Although the *News* and its country had some reason to feel put upon by public comment and sentiment in the spring and summer of 1859, the paper managed to keep its sense of humor. There's a wry sort of honest levity in an item which appeared on August 27:

INFIT FROM PIKE'S PEAK.

Some time since we were giving tables showing items to constitute a complete outfit to Pike's Peak. We are now able to give a schedule of an infit as we saw exemplified yesterday by one who has been there and got back:

- 1 ragged coat with collar and tail torn off.
- 1 pair pants, hanging together by shreds.
- 1 old black hat, barrin' the brim.
- 1½ shoes, looking like fried bacon.
- ¼ lb. raw beans.
- ½ pint parched corn.
- 00,000 oz. of gold dust and nuggets.
- specie, nary red.

In answer to my interrogatory whether he designed returning to Pike's Peak shortly, our traveler responded, "not by a jug full."

Not all the gobacks walked home in one and a half shoes. Some decided to make a water passage, down the Platte. This was a difficult undertaking. For the Platte is not a navigable stream. Not then, and particularly not now with the intensive irrigation of the rich Platte Valley lands northeast from Denver. (For many years irrigated Weld County, once part of the Great American Desert, has ranked among the half dozen top agricultural counties of the nation in cash value of crops.) Sometimes, when the season has been long and dry and the irrigation demands heavy, the Platte entirely disappears as a stream of water, leaving long stretches of dry bottom exposed to the sun. The trickles of affluents farther down slowly rebuild a river.

Frémont tried boating the Platte on one of his expeditions and gave it up. Some of the fur traders had used the uncertain stream, in proper seasons, to float bales of skins down to Missouri River trading posts like Peter Sarpy's at Bellevue. But no one, least of all the Plains Indians, counted on the Platte as a reliable waterway. This fact was just one of many the gobacks didn't know about the country they had visited briefly and were now fleeing; they went blithely ahead and built scows and rafts.

The season was with them. Perhaps the wet spring had kept the river flowing steady and deep over the endless shoals and sand bars. At any rate some of the river runners made relatively quick trips home to the Missouri, and there was enough water in the stream that some of them drowned. A lot more swamped in the swift, erratic currents immediately

below Denver or grew tired of poling and dragging their vessels through the shallows where the river spreads out to flow down across Nebraska in great broad loops. William and Charles Fry, experienced Missouri rivermen, were two of the successful ones. They built a flatboat 11 feet long by $3\frac{1}{2}$ wide, drawing only four inches, and set out from Denver on May 4. They made it to St. Joseph in twenty days, compared with the thirty to forty days required for an overland crossing. The Chicago Academy of Science was a loser on one of the unsuccessful voyages. The *News* of May 14 regretted "to learn of the wreck of Mr. C. Davisson's boat on the Platte, on his second day's sail, with the loss of his provisions, books, notes, clothing, etc., to the value of about \$1000. Mr. D. had a fine collection of botanical and geological specimens, &c, which he intended as a present to the Chicago Academy of Science. Mr. D. describes the shores of the Platte along which he sailed as most beautiful and abounding in wild game but he will try a safer method hereafter."

While the gobacks streamed home by land or by water, events were shaping up in the hills to bring some of them scampering back again for three crossings of the formidable plains in a single season. Actually one of the events had occurred in January but was held as a tight-lipped secret until April.

George A. Jackson was among the few score men who had elected to winter through in the new country. He and two or three companions made a camp on Vasquez Fork in the lateral valley behind the first foothills of the Rockies about where the town of Golden now is situated. Jackson was a California forty-niner and knew how to go about the grubby business of prospecting. When the winter turned out to be an open one he pushed up into the mountains with his dogs, Drum and Kit, to see if he could find colors in the half-frozen creek. So far as is known, Jackson was the first prospector purposefully to seek gold in the Colorado Rockies; the others on the scene still were trying the Platte, Cherry, Ralston, Little Dry, and other creeks and dry washes down on the plains.

On New Year's Day of 1859 Jackson was startled to see smoke rising from a mountain valley. He feared Utes but scouted ahead through the snow, which at this elevation lay deep on the hills. Instead of Indians, he discovered the warm mineral waters at what is now Idaho Springs. The springs were sending clouds of steam up into the frosty air, and gathered about the warm-water pools were large flocks of mountain sheep. Jackson moved down and made the sheep his larder.

Jackson kept a diary, and in it he tells of his troubles with mountain lions and his success with gold. The lions—*carcajous* to the early trappers—were attracted to the spot, as Jackson was, by the plentiful supply of fat mutton, and the prospector had to kill three of them in less than a week. Excerpts from his diary give the story:

Jan. 2—"Drum" and "Kit" woke me by low growls at daylight; sheep all gone; mountain lion within twenty steps; pulled gun from under blanket and shot too quick; broke his shoulder, but followed up and killed him. Clear, high wind, and very cold. In camp all day; built bough house, and ate fat sheep all day; bread all gone; plenty fat meat; "no wantum bread."

Jan. 3—Still clear and cold. Sheep came down again; are very tame; walk up to within one hundred yards of camp and stand and stamp at me and the dogs; mountain lion killed one within 300 yards of camp to-day, and scattered the whole band again; went up the main creek to another tributary coming in from the south, a little larger than this one.

Jan. 5—Up before day; killed a fat sheep and wounded a mountain lion before sunrise; ate ribs for breakfast; drank last of my coffee; after breakfast moved up half mile to next creek on south side; made new camp under big fir tree; good gravel here; looks like it carries gold; wind has blown snow off the rim, but gravel is hard frozen; panned out two cups; no gold in either.

Jan. 6—Pleasant day; built big fire on rim-rock to thaw the gravel; kept it up all day; carcajou came into camp while I was at fire; dogs killed him after I broke his neck with belt-axe; hell of a fight.

Jan. 7—Clear day; removed fire embers and dug into rim on bedrock, panned out eight treaty cups¹¹ of dirt and found nothing but fine colors; ninth cup I got one nugget of coarse gold; feel good to-night; dogs don't. "Drum" is lame all over; sewed up gash in his leg to-night; carcajou no good for dog.

Jan. 8—Pleasant day. . . . I've got the diggings at last . . . dogs can't travel; damn a carcajou. Dug and panned to-day until my belt-knife was worn out, so I will have to quit, or use my skinning knife. I have about a half-ounce of gold, so will quit and try and get back in the spring.

Jackson had dug out with his sheath knife only about nine dollars worth of gold at prices then current, but his experience in California told him there was more to be had. He went back down to the plains, kept his counsel, and waited for the thaw. He was back in the spring as guide and leader of a party of prospectors known as the Chicago Company. On April 17 they met together at the mouth of the stream since known as Chicago Creek and formally organized the first mining district in Colorado. Then they knocked the box beds of their wagons apart for lumber to make sluices and went to work in what became known as

¹¹Iron drinking cup, holding about a pint, of a type furnished by the federal government to the Indians with their treaty goods.

Jackson's Diggings or Chicago Bar. Within seven days they had nineteen hundred dollars in gold.

The first of the two bonanzas which were to save Denver now had been hit.

Word of the strike trickled down to the Cherry Creek settlements, thirty miles away, early in May, and editor Byers of the *News* bounced right up to take a look—and stake a claim. He was not alone. Smiley says there was a "headlong stampede for Clear creek, and real estate in Auraria and Denver rose in value by leaps and bounds a hundred percent at a jump." Byers reported in the May 28 *News* that he found three hundred men already at work on May 14 when he got there, and he had not dallied along the way.

The Jackson Diggings, like most of the other early Colorado "mines," were placers. The gold they produced was float gold—small flakes or grains of the yellow metal which because of their weight could be washed free of earth and sand in a pan. Now and then nuggets were found in placer mining, but mostly the recovery was in "dust" or "flour" gold. The gold pan was the basic tool, at least for prospecting. This was and is a shallow basin with straight-sloping sides in which a miner swirls water in a circular movement over a few handfuls of likely-looking gravel. As the soil and sand are swept over the brim the heavier gold is left in the bottom of the pan. Panning gold still is practiced, professionally and by amateurs, along Colorado streams, and during the great depression of the 1930s Denver's Opportunity School for adults taught the process to classes which met in the bed of Cherry Creek where it passes through the downtown district. Some of the unemployed took a dollar or two in gold daily from the stream which had so frustrated the fifty-niners.

The refinements of panning for gold involved the cradle or rocker, the Long Tom, and the sluice. The cradle was a small box of wood or sheet iron on rockers. A few shovelfuls of pay dirt would be scooped into the box, water added, and the whole machine then rocked until the gold had settled and the dross was slopped over the sides. In some cases a cradle had two bottoms, an upper one of coarse screen to catch rocks and larger bits of gravel and a lower, watertight basin to catch the gold. A Long Tom was a larger cradle, often requiring several strong men at its upright handles to provide the rocking motion. Sluices were U-shaped troughs of boards—the longer and larger the better—in which a stream of water was kept flowing by gravity. Dirt was shoveled into the sluice all along the way and any gold which was washed free was captured by small cleats nailed transversely at intervals along the bottom of the trough. Sometimes bits of carpet were used in place of the cleats, the nap catching the gold. A supply of quicksilver greatly helped in gold recovery, if the miner was well financed enough to have it on hand. A little mercury could be placed behind the cleats of a sluice or in the bottom basin of a rocker and by its affinity for gold would pick up and hold any

passing particles. The quicksilver then could be retorted off over a campfire, leaving the gold behind.

Placer mining was backbreaking labor, an item which contributed to its unpopularity among the greenhorns and tenderfeet of '59, and it was slow. Hard-rock mining in tunnels and shafts required capital and machines and yielded larger returns. It sent men burrowing into the mountains themselves to seek out the veins of ore and the "mother lodes" which had cast the small particles and nuggets of gold into the streams. It would come later.

The next discovery, which became known in May of 1859, was a placer too, but it pointed the way toward a hard-rock mining operation which would boast that it sat upon "the richest square mile on earth."

The discoverer's name was Gregory, John H., and he was "poor white trash" from Georgia. The spot was just over a high ridge on the north fork of Clear Creek, less than ten miles from Jackson's Diggings. The date has been forgotten, but it was sometime in February. Like Jackson, Gregory was winter prospecting, and he stumbled onto the outcroppings of a lode which would make fortunes for hundreds of men.

On his winter tramp Gregory washed out a small amount of gold in the gulch which now carries his name, but he was forced to retreat to the plains for provisions. The showing hadn't been much, and he was discouraged. He didn't like hard work very much anyway, his associates later said. But he told of his findings to a party of South Bend, Indiana, men, and they persuaded him to lead them back up into the hills in May. In the group were David K. Wall, the Defrees brothers, William Ziegler, William Fouts from Missouri, and a man named Kendall from Iowa.

Gregory and his associates held their tongues through March and April as they laid quiet plans. On May 6 they reached the steep gulch where Gregory had found colors. Climbing up the slope, they began prospecting with pick and shovel, with Gregory, by virtue of his rank as discoverer, in the role of straw boss.

"Here's a likely-looking spot," he told Defrees. "Stick your shovel in there, Wilk.

"Now give me some in the pan," he directed.

The half peck of dirt washed out in a nearby stream to \$4.00 in gold. Succeeding pans were almost equally rich; forty of them produced \$40. Here was a bonanza at last. Gregory put aside his pan and built a sluice. In a week he had taken out \$972, and this was only a beginning. Before long many claims in Gregory Gulch and nearby Russell Gulch were yielding \$3000 to \$4000 a day. In the years ahead, when hard-rock mining began and refining problems were solved, the nearby hills would give up millions and create mining kings and smelting magnates in dazzling numbers.

Those who wrote about it later said John Gregory seemed dazed at first by what he had wrought.

"By God, now my wife can be a lady!" he shouted. "My children will be schooled!"

Then, according to those who were there, he worked hard for a week or two, began muttering to himself, and finally came loose at the hinges. In a transaction which demonstrates his shaken condition, he sold out his two choice claims for \$22,000 to two men without capital, loaning them \$200 for tools and taking as payment \$500 a week in the proceeds from his own pay dirt. His successors washed out \$607 in their first day of operations. Gregory became a this-pan-for-hire prospector for other parties at a fee of \$200 a day, and in September he went home to Georgia with \$30,000. He came back the next year, bought a quartz mill for \$7000, operated it several weeks at a profit of \$200 a day, and sold it for six times its cost. Then, mysteriously, John Gregory disappears from the Colorado story. No one ever bothered to find out whether Mrs. Gregory became a lady or the Gregory children got to Harvard.

News of Gregory's bonanza couldn't be kept secret long. Word sped into Denver and up the south fork of Clear Creek to Jackson's Diggings on May 17. There were at that time seventeen persons working in Gregory Gulch and environs; by June 5 there were thirty thousand.

The discovery "set the country wild, not only this country, but the whole country," editor Byers of the *News* wrote. Byers himself learned about it at Jackson's Diggings and two days later was on the scene in Gregory Gulch, again alternating his time between reporting for his newspaper and staking claims. He told his readers he personally had washed out one four-dollar pan. Byers held part ownership in a Gregory district mine for the rest of his life, but he missed the wealth that came to others in that rich cañon. His accounts indicate that his interest in the Great Mammoth mine earned him nothing but a long series of assessments.

Between the two of them Gregory and Jackson had vindicated the editorial position of the *News*. There was gold at Pike's Peak, after all. At first the newspapers on the other side of the plains scoffed at the discovery reports in the *News*, branded the paper the "*Rocky Mountain Liar*," and consigned Byers to flames. Later they were forced to abandon the humbug vogue and republish the *News'* accounts of what was going on in Rocky Mountain gulches and valleys. Byers continued to bound happily from strike to strike, and his reports bear scrutiny in terms of modern standards of newspaper objectivity. He was eternally confident and buoyant, but he also was diligently factual and he never ceased to point out that most of the men who were hitting it were experienced or well capitalized or both.

In the first real gold discoveries, as in nearly everything else of the pioneer period, Byers was involved intimately from the beginning. He was on the ground almost before Gregory had straightened up to examine the findings in his pan. He wrote:

. . . When I reached the . . . diggings on the 19th of May, Gregory . . . had two lengths of sluices started and had been sluicing a part of three days with one man helping him and he had taken out about \$1000 in gold. He quit work then. When I went there he was living under a little shelter of pine boughs on the side of the hill. . . . I was gathering news for the newspaper and thought I would at once see him. . . . I went down the gulch, climbed up the hillside to his camp and he was muttering to himself about his good fortune. He seemed like a man half witted and the burden of his thoughts seemed to be the advantage it would be to his family, it would make gentlemen and ladies of his children. He belonged to the class of poor whites in Georgia, and thought it would make a new man of him, give him wealth and position and admit him to society. . . . He had the habit of talking to himself. I went to him and began talking to him, told him who I was and that I represented a paper. That seemed to arouse some interest in his mind. I told him I would like to know what he was doing, what he had found, he leaned back and turned over the frying pan turned upside down on the ground and there lay three chunks of retorted gold, the result of his three days work. He had gathered the gold with quicksilver in his sluice and had retorted it, had squeezed it out in a buckskin as dry as he could and had retorted it in a common little iron retort and it had left three irregular pieces of gold something like brick bats, that laid there under the frying pan . . . worth \$300 to \$400 each. . . .¹²

A few days later Byers was part of a bit of political sleight of hand which probably averted revolution in the now populous gulch. The first regulations drawn up for the district had followed California custom and specified that claims should be 50 by 150 feet in size. The multitudes of newcomers, who were stepping on each other's heels, thought this too much. They wanted the claims cut down to 25 feet in width. So they called a meeting. The thousands who attended covered both slopes of the gulch and looked, Byers wrote, "like a flock of blackbirds."

The firstcomers, now old settlers of some three weeks' duration, mingled with the crowd. First they arranged to have Gregory's companion, Wilkes Defrees, appointed chairman. Then Wilkes rose to his responsibility and appointed a twelve-man committee—all old-timers—to take up the matter of amending the district regulations. Byers was one of the appointees. He recalled the moment as "the most dramatic scene I ever had part in." The committee withdrew into the woods to deliberate, emerged to return a report sustaining the original claim measurements. The mass meeting, unaware it had been outwitted, grudgingly gave its assent and dispersed. Byers later justified the bit of jobbery on grounds that the original dimensions were established mining practice. It was, he said, "an instance where a minority of certainly not five percent, I do not know whether it exceeded one percent of the people actually

¹²Byers, Bancroft ms.

present . . . carried the voice of the meeting with it because the opposition had no organization. . . ."

The stampede to Gregory Gulch drew all sorts of people and spawned a thousand legends. There was, for example, the hard-shell preacher from Wisconsin. On the first Sabbath after his arrival he preached from a point of rocks overlooking the gulch. With great eloquence the reverend exhorted his congregation to follow paths of righteousness and avoid the sins which new-found gold must surely encourage. He ended his pleading with an invitation to any who wished to come to his tent that evening for another meeting. The evening sermon turned out to be a social game of twenty-one, from the proceeds of which the reverend next day purchased a rich claim. Jerome Smiley asserts it for historical fact that the adroit dominie later sold his mine for a hundred thousand dollars.

There was also "Mountain Charley" Forest, the "veritable and notorious Charley, smoking, drinking, swearing," as the *News* put it. Charley wore pants and cussed, but the real name was Eliza Jane Forest. In her autobiography she claims that she donned men's clothing to track down the murderer of her husband. She became a cabin boy on Mississippi boats, worked as a brakeman for the Illinois Central Railroad, engaged in business as a mule skinner in California, came to Colorado and held her own in a man's country both as prospector and saloonkeeper. It was "Mountain Charley" who opened up the Mountain Boys Saloon in Auraria. It was a dive of ill repute, the bluenoses said, and catered exclusively to a clientele given to settling arguments with bowie knives. Eliza said she twice cornered the man responsible for her widowhood—once in St. Louis and once in Denver—and shot him both times. In neither case, however, was the revenge complete, and Eliza finally consoled herself by marrying her barkeep.

"Mountain Charley" and the ordained twenty-one dealer were only two of many who beat their ways up through the roadless mountains to the fabulous gulch. A blacksmith arrived and promptly became a man of means by sharpening picks at fifty cents each. A butcher shop set up to convert worn-out yoke oxen into steaks. Mountain City came into being at the foot of the cliff below Gregory's lode. Within a month it had given way to Black Hawk and Central City. The latter became one of Colorado's major towns and threatened for a time to overshadow Denver in population and importance. Central City built itself a stone opera house to which came Edwin Booth, Emma Abbott, and the "divine" Fanny Barlow in *Mazeppa*. The same opera house today presents a summer opera and drama festival featuring stars of the Metropolitan and such players as Helen Hayes, Maurice Evans, Katharine Cornell, and Shirley Booth. The present atmosphere of *haut* culture and formal-dress openings, Lucius Beebe in attendance, represents a wild and improbable contrast with the Gregory Gulch of 1859.

Then, the mountains around about literally were being turned inside out in the scramble for gold. The scars remain. And the hills are treeless. It was not always so. Some of the pines gave way to the ax in a frenzy of cabin building which saw more than two hundred rough houses built in less than two weeks in May of 1859, and some fell in flames as the richest square mile on earth caught the brunt of manifest destiny in full cry. Perhaps by design in order to clear land for their placers, perhaps accidentally in the insatiable hunger for lumber to build houses and sluices, one way or the other the miners casually put fire to the primeval forests around them. At least three of the argonauts, with their pony and dog, were caught in the backlash of the flames and perished. It was weeks before the fires burned themselves out to leave a blackened landscape which has not recovered in the century since.

The first instances of Indian savagery also were stirred into the cauldron of flame, tumult, and avaricious scramble. A small party of the mountain-roaming Utes, perhaps attracted by the forest fires and possibly resentful of their effect on future hunting, ambushed three miners, killed one, mortally wounded another, and sent the third fleeing. "Trouble with the Indians. Our Miners Shot and Scalped without Provocation," the *News* headlined. A little later the Utes struck again in the Taylor Park country to the south. Six bodies, scalped and mutilated, were found in a place since known as Dead Men's Gulch. Kit Carson, then agent to the Utes at Taos, had warned of just such tragedies in a report to the Bureau of Indian Affairs that spring:

I have been informed that in the Belle Solado [Bayou Salade, or South Park] gold has been discovered, and that large parties of miners are on their way thither. If such is the case the Utahs will be dissatisfied. The Belle is the only place in their country where game of any consequence can be found, and if the miners and Indians come in contact I fear there will be trouble. The Indians will object to their being in their country and, if able, will drive them thence. . . .

In spite of Utes, however, and in the face of mounting doubts and shrill cries of hoax, gold now had been discovered in the Rocky Mountains in quantities somewhat approaching the advance billing.

Out on the plains the backwash of gobacks wavered as word of the discoveries passed down the line. Many reversed their courses again and headed back toward Pike's Peak. Many more, still muttering their disappointments, rejected the news as merely a new variation on a cruel scheme.

The *Rocky Mountain News* now had reported the bonanzas simply, directly, factually, with on-the-scene coverage by the editor. But the Missouri border journals wouldn't believe. They preferred to regard Byers as a scoundrel and his paper as a liar. A more disinterested vindica-

tion was needed, and it was on the way. Horace Greeley was headed west.

"We see a note in the N. Y. Tribune, from Horace Greeley," the *News* told its readers on May 28, "announcing his intention of making a western tour, extending his visit to the gold mines of this country, and hence to Salt Lake City, thence to California, and return to New York by the Isthmus. He may be expected in a few days. We hope a hearty welcome may greet him."

The co-founder of the Republican party—probably the only Republican editor ever to employ Karl Marx as a foreign correspondent—at the moment was jolting through eastern Kansas in a Concord coach of the Leavenworth and Pike's Peak Express Company. Two of the company's coaches earlier had made their way to Denver in nineteen days, breaking a new trail on the way. They had arrived at Cherry Creek on May 7, giving the settlements their first transportation link with civilization. Meanwhile the express company had established twenty-six relay stations along the route and now two coaches daily were started from each end of the line with fair irregularity. The charge was a hundred dollars one way.

Greeley boarded his coach at Manhattan, Kansas, on May 27. Already aboard was Albert D. Richardson, then a correspondent for the *Boston Journal*. Later, as a result of this trip, Richardson became the ace member of Greeley's *Tribune* staff and was about to be made managing editor when a love rival shot him to death in a scandal which left the New York of 1869 gasping.

Greeley and Richardson apparently hit it off well together from the start, and away they rocked, adventurous companion scribblers, across the endless Kansas prairie. The tour of the famous *Tribune* editor was being watched with great interest not only by his own readers but also by all who learned that the great man was passing through. His white slouch hat and bleached-out linen duster were trade marks familiar to all. Even the aborigines were awed. An Indian girl commented in Richardson's hearing: "Horace Greeley in his old white coat is sitting in that coach."

The dispatches the two men sent back to their papers from points along the 650-mile route carried parallel comments on three items of interest: the bone-shaking jolts of stage travel, the enormous migration on the plains, and the endless herds of buffalo. For miles the prairie would be black with the ponderous, shaggy animals. They looked "like wood-land afar off." The two travelers, along with all their fellow voyagers of the desert, dined on the meat of the humpbacked beast. Greeley didn't care for what he ate: "I do not like the flesh of this wild ox. It is tough and not juicy." Richardson said the meat "tastes like ordinary beef though of coarser fiber, and sometimes with a strong, unpleasant flavor. When cut from calves or young cows it is tender and toothsome."

Plains traffic of Pike's Peakers coming and going amazed both men. Richardson estimated their coach passed ten thousand migrants en route to the mines, and Greeley noted that they were arriving at Cherry Creek at a rate of one hundred a day. "Six weeks ago not a track had been made upon this route," the *Journal* correspondent wrote. "Now it resembles a long-used turnpike. We meet many returning emigrants, who declare the mines a humbug; but pass hundreds of undismayed gold-seekers still pressing on."

All day on May 27, Greeley wrote, the coach met eastbound ox wagons loaded with disheartened men who told tales of disillusion. Greeley's dispatch said:

. . . Those whom we met . . . coming down confirm the worst news we have had from the Peak. There is scarcely any gold there; those who dig cannot average two shillings per day; all who can get away are leaving; Denver and Auraria are nearly deserted; terrible sufferings have been endured on the Plains, and more must yet be encountered; hundreds would gladly work for their board, but cannot find employment—in short, Pike's Peak is an exploded bubble, which thousands must bitterly rue to the end of their days. Such is the tenor of our latest advices. I have received none this side of Leavenworth that contradict them. My informant says all are getting away who can, and that we shall find the region nearly deserted. That is likely, but we shall see.¹⁸

As to the personal discomforts of traveling journalists, Greeley and Richardson agreed that a Concord coach represented a threat to one's molars. Nearing Station Seventeen, they fell into a jocular discussion of the precipitous descents their coach made into the many arroyos, gullies, and dry washes that intersected the road.

"It is some consolation," Richardson suggested, "that the sides of these gullies cannot be worse than perpendicular."

"They could be and are," his older and more vulnerable companion insisted. "Some of them not only have perpendicular sides but also an inclination of forty-five degrees to one side of the track." Within a few minutes Greeley would accumulate the scars to prove it.

As the coach descended one of the abrupt hills the mules were spooked by an approaching band of Indians. Richardson got out of the coach to take the lead team by the head. The driver pulled up with all his weight, and the left rein to the leaders parted. The mules, Greeley recalled later, "sheared out of the road and ran diagonally down the pitch. In a second, the wagon went over, hitting the ground a most spiteful blow. I of course went over with it, and when I rose to my feet as soon as possible, considerable bewildered and disheveled, the mules had been disengaged by the upset and were making good time across the

¹⁸Horace Greeley, *An Overland Journey from New York to San Francisco* (New York, 1860), p. 85. The book collects Greeley's dispatches to the *Tribune*.

prairie, while the driver, considerably hurt, was getting out from under the carriage to limp after them. I had a slight cut on my left cheek and a deep gouge from the sharp corner of a seat in my left leg below the knee, with a pretty smart concussion generally, but not a bone started nor a tendon strained, and I walked away to the station as firmly as ever. . . ." Greeley would spend nearly a month in Denver recuperating from his injuries and walked with a limp for a year later.

The rest of the journey was comparatively uneventful, Indians peaceful and landscape dreary in its flat, dry monotony. On the morning of June 6, after rolling all night, the stage arrived in Denver City. Editor Byers of the *News*, fresh down from the excitement in Gregory Gulch, was on hand to greet the arrivals. Richardson said the other men who gathered about the coach "were attired in slouched hats, tattered woollen shirts, buckskin pantaloons and moccasins; and had knives and revolvers suspended from their belts." The *News* gave notice of the presence of the eminent visitor:

HON. HORACE GREELEY

This distinguished gentleman arrived in our city on Monday morning last, by Leavenworth coach, and is spending a few days in this region for the purpose of investigating and reporting upon the true conditions of the mines and agricultural resources of the country. On Monday evening he delivered a short address to an assemblage of our citizens, giving much wholesome advice and recommending a state form of government, independent of all political influences.

He reported himself as being perfectly astounded with the reported gold discoveries and only hoped he might find them as rich upon investigation. The agricultural resources are even better than he hoped. On Tuesday morning he set out for the mines to spend a few days rambling among the Rocky Mountains.¹⁴

Denver was afire with the recent revelations of the Jackson and Gregory strikes, and Greeley's first Colorado letter to the *Tribune*, dated June 6, caught the spirit of the day:

. . . As to gold, Denver is crazy. She has been low in the valley of humiliation, and is suddenly exalted to the summit of glory. The stories of days' works, and rich leads that have been told me to-day—by grave, intelligent men—are absolutely bewildering. I do not discredit them, but I shall state nothing at second hand where I may know if I will. I have come here to lay my hand on the naked, indisputable facts, and I mean to do it. Though unfit for travel, I start for the great diggings (fifty miles hence nearly due west in the glens of the Rocky Mountains) to-morrow morning.¹⁵

¹⁴*Rocky Mountain News*, June 11, 1859.

¹⁵Greeley, op. cit., p. 114.

Greeley and Richardson were taken to the Denver House for lodging. This "Astor of the Rockies" was a long, low log building, about 130 feet in length by 36 in width. It had a roof of white canvas and windows of the same stuff. The earthen floor was sprinkled regularly to keep down the dust kicked up by traffic to and from the bar and a half dozen gaming tables. Although one end of the building was curtained by sheeting into several "rooms" for guests, the Denver House was much more a saloon and gambling hall than a hotel.

Guests of the house demanded that Greeley favor them with an address, and Horace never was known to refuse a platform. Byers said he talked about politics and gave wholesome advice, for both of which the man in the white linen duster was noted. Richardson goes on to supply the details of a strange and wonderful meeting. In the veritable presence of Demon Rum and Goddess Chance, the doughty Greeley reared back and delivered himself of a rouser on temperance and the evils of gambling. "On one side the tipplers at the bar silently sipped their grog," Richardson noted; "on the other the gamblers respectfully suspended the shuffling of cards and the counting of money from their huge piles of coin. . . ." The dissertation, he said, "was received with perfect good humor."

Next morning Byers collected the celebrated visitors and escorted them off to see the golden wonders at Gregory's Diggings. They were joined by Henry Villard, then roving Rocky Mountain correspondent for the *Cincinnati Commercial* and later the builder of the Northern Pacific Railroad. Villard had arrived in Denver City by an earlier coach.

They crossed the Platte via the rope ferry, and Greeley took note of the long line of wagons waiting at the landing. The ferryman, he concluded, was "making his pile out of the diggings" if no one else was. He saw that two or three farms had been established on the west side of the river. In the foothills, where Clear Creek tumbles out of the Rockies at the present site of suburban Golden, the party abandoned its wagon and took to muleback. Very gingerly, in the case of the wounded and sore Greeley. All along the steep trail the party of journalists traveled in company with a steady stream of gold-seekers. The previous week Byers had met more than a thousand in the fifteen miles or so from Gregory Gulch to the edge of the plains. Even now they still were moving up the trail at the rate of five hundred a day—and departing, Greeley reported, in daily batches of a hundred.

In crossing one mountain creek Greeley's mule stumbled on the rocky bottom and nearly pitched him into the icy waters. "Had she done it," he confessed, "I am sure I had not the strength left to rise and remount." But the determined editor pushed on. When the expedition stopped for the night he had to be "tenderly lifted from my saddle and laid on a blanket." He was too tired and stiff to eat or sleep, and he spent his

first night in the Rocky Mountain wilderness massaging his sore and chafed body.

The following day the party pushed through to tumultuous Gregory Gulch, where twenty sluices now were in operation and speculation in claims had shot prices as high as \$6000. One miner demonstrated panning for the reporters, and they saw him take out \$2.50 in gold. Another prospector hit \$17.87—Richardson recorded the decimals—from a single pan. For two days the newspapermen moved from camp to camp in the gulches centered about Mountain City, observing the frenzied operations and taking notes.

The occasion, of course, called for speeches. Greeley had the rhetoric in stock and talked at length to fifteen hundred to two thousand men sprawled among the boulders on the two sides of the cañon. His opening and his close each received "three rousing cheers," the *News* reported. He talked of a vast future for the region and advocated immediate statehood, and he urged the miners to eschew drinking, gaming, and other unspecified temptations to which he felt they were peculiarly exposed. They should, he counseled, "live as the loved ones they left at home—the brothers and sisters, fathers and mothers, wives and children—would wish." He advocated that any gambler who came among them should be put on a mule and asked if he would not like to take a ride. (Laughter and applause.) He was going on, he said, to California, and the main purpose of his overland journey was "to hasten the construction of the Pacific Railroad, which ought to have been built long ago." (Loud applause.)

At last the reporters decided they had seen their fill of gold being wrung from the earth. They sat down to collaborate on a report to the waiting world. Greeley conceded that he had touched the nude facts he had come after, but he reserved some doubts on moral, aesthetic, and conservalational grounds. He asked himself "will disemboweling these mountains in quest of gold *pay*?" and judged that it was "a very pregnant question." An ascending scale of pregnancy established, he was ready to join Richardson and Villard in proclaiming the truth about Pike's Peak madness. They handed their dispatch to the express company for delivery to Byers, who had gone back to his paper in Auraria.

Byers and Gibson were standing by, anxiously awaiting the verdict of writers, particularly Greeley, whose names were known and would carry weight in the East. They were short on paper. Dr. Gilbert C. Monell, third partner in the *News* enterprise, had left Omaha a month after the advance party and was supposed to bring out a stock of newsprint. He got as far as Julesburg in northeastern Colorado and then was caught in the goback throng and swept home to Omaha. He never came to Denver. But John Dailey had on hand in Wootton's attic a supply of thin brown wrapping paper, and it was made ready for the press.

The coach from the mountains rolled into town on June 11, and a

few hours later the *Rocky Mountain News* appeared on the streets with its first extra: four columns of hastily set type imprinted on one side of small squares of grocer's wrapper.

"Extra—Greeley's Report," the headline proclaimed.

We are indebted to the kindness of Mr. Williams, of the Leavenworth & Pike's Peak Express, for the following report from Messrs. Greeley, Richardson and Villard, which will give satisfaction to the public mind, and at once set at rest the cry of "humbug" reiterated by the returning emigration from this region. The names of the gentlemen signed to this report are sufficient to give it credence without further comment from us; and the indefatigable exertions of Mr. Williams to get it before the public are commendable.

Greeley, Richardson, and Villard wrote that they had "seen the gold plainly visible in the riffles of nearly every sluice, and in nearly every pan of rotten quartz washed in our presence." They had also "seen gold, (but rarely), visible to the naked eye, in pieces of the quartz not yet fully decomposed. . . ." They went on to give the names of miners, their home towns, and the results of their labors to date. Ziegler, Spain & Co. of South Bend, Indiana, had \$3000; Sopris, Henderson & Co. of Farmington, Indiana, took \$607 in four days; Foote & Simmons from Chicago, \$40; Shorts & Collier had been offered \$10,000 for their claim.

They warned that "many persons who have come here without provisions or money, are compelled to work as common laborers at from \$1 to \$3 per day and board," and they could not "conclude this statement without protesting most earnestly against a renewal of the infatuation which impelled thousands to rush to this region a month or two since, only to turn back before reaching it, or to hurry away immediately after, more hastily than they came. Gold-mining is a business which eminently requires of its votaries, capital, experience, energy, endurance, and in which the highest qualities do not always command success. . . ."

The words were like a melody to Byers. This was what he had been saying all along, only to see his paper described as the "*Rocky Mountain Liar*." Now, at last, he had distinguished confirmation. Denver would not be abandoned after all.

The *News* extra sped eastward along the lines of returning emigrants, and the name Greeley was magic. The great *Tribune* crusader—even if he *had* gone off his rocker on that Brook Farm utopia—was a solid man and would never lend himself to a hoax. The report, Richardson wrote, "was widely copied throughout the country as the first specific, disinterested and trustworthy account of the newly-discovered placers." The brown-paper broadside, an ugly little sheet, had changed the prospects of an infant city from dismal to bright.

The tide has turned, Byers soon would write. Events and Horace Greeley himself now sustained his earlier rhapsody:

Let us then rejoice that the demand has equalled the supply, and now that a brighter day is dawning and the mountains are seen to blossom with gold-bearing quartz; strain every nerve to make the best use of our time to reap the golden harvest, which seems at every hill and glade to meet our pathway ere we reach the snowclad mountains of the Rocky Mountain Range. Let notices be prevalent on the saloon doors—"gone to the mountains." There is room for all and thousands more, who will prospect and faint not until their hopes are realized.

"But mark in conclusion," the editor scolded, "gold is not bought without labor."

CHAPTER FIVE

The Inky Pioneers

VINDICATION for the soaring optimism of Byers and his *News*, although it was on the way, took time. The Greeley extra, since it appeared suspiciously on wrapping paper, was denounced as a forgery by many Eastern papers. Temporarily, some of the editors back in "the States" continued to hoot their derision in the direction of Pike's Peak and its journal. It was at this point that the Davenport, Iowa, *Gazette* cued in on the unlikely newsprint:

The Cherry Creek Rocky Mountain News comes to us printed on brown wrapping paper. The editor has evidently lied his paper black in the face. This number teems with glorious news about new discoveries of gold, and says the town is half deserted. So we heard, but not from that cause. . . .¹

The *Gazette* conveniently overlooked the Greeley by-line and invented the part about Denver being deserted, but with gold now coming down from the mountains in quantities which soon would require the establishment of a mint, Byers could reply with all the complacency of a poker player with four aces. This was grand and glorious country, and no less an oracle than Horace Greeley confirmed it—in the face of some rather compelling reasons for distaste.

His trip to the Rockies was proving to be considerably more than a placid rural jaunt. The Greeley-Richardson-Villard expedition tottered down out of the hills bruised and battered. Villard's mule snapped a saddle girth, pitched the future railroad magnate headfirst into a rock, then dragged him down the trail with his foot caught in the stirrup. Villard "declared himself the victim of misplaced confidence," Richardson said. Greeley, still recovering from injuries suffered in the stage upset, now also had to contend with saddle soreness. He was "so lame he could barely hobble." One might have supposed he would have returned to Denver with a profound aversion to both mules and mountain grandeurs. But though soul and body were sorely tried, there still was starch in the Greeley shirt; and he wrote:

¹Quoted in Smiley, *History of Denver*, p. 294.

The Rocky Mountains, with their grand, aromatic forests, their glassy glades, their frequent springs and dancing streams of the brightest, sweetest water, their pure, elastic atmosphere and their unequaled game and fish, are destined to be the favorite resort of civilized man. I never visited a region where physical life could be more surely prolonged or fully enjoyed.²

Some Rocky Mountain tourists assert the "elastic atmosphere" leaves them a little giddy at first, but if this was the explanation in Greeley's case the euphoria did not extend to the ganglia controlling his oratorical reflexes. He had been back in the Cherry Creek settlements only overnight when he again was invited to say a few words to the assemblage in the Denver House. This time it was Byers who preserved the scene and the utterances of the *Tribune* editor to "red-shirted, bearded-faced adventurers":

. . . He stood behind a gambling table, accommodately deserted for the occasion by the owner, a scienced dealer of French or three card monte. The white-coated philosopher gave much good and fatherly advice to a mixed audience of some two or three hundred persons, and wound up with a recommendation to early test the agricultural resources of the country. As he stepped from the table, it was again occupied by its industrious owner, who opened with, "Come down! come down! gentlemen; who goes \$40 on the ace?—Come, gentlemen, rull up, and down your dust; you'll find this don't much resemble agriculture, but it's mightily like mining" were the words that greeted the renowned Horace as he made his exit from the room.³

This sort of thing had been interesting and lively the first time around. But now the busy attractions of Rocky Mountain inns were palling on the battered Greeley, whose admiration, in any case, was for rural quiet rather than rustic gaming. Although it was he who christened the Denver House the Astor of the Pike's Peak country, he cannot have cherished a very high opinion of hotel keeping, mountain style. Up in the Gregory Diggings he, Richardson, and Villard, along with three others, had been crammed into a little tent ambitiously named the Mountain City Hotel. They slept on the ground, "lying so close," Richardson said, "that none of us could turn over separately." The noisy Denver House, with the constant clamor of pitchmen urging victims to buck the tiger, now was too much; it "proved unfavorable to literary pursuits."

So Greeley and his future star reporter checked out and jumped a cabin. They chose the best empty one they could find, moved in, and took possession. A few days later the owner came down from the mines and looked in on them. Richardson remembered that "he apologized

²*Rocky Mountain News*, Aug. 27, 1859.

³*Ibid.*, Feb. 15, 1860.

humbly for his intrusion, (most obsequious and marvelous of landlords!) begged us to make ourselves entirely at home, and then withdrew, to jump the best vacant cabin *he* could find, until the departure of his non-paying tenants. We design exhibiting him at the next world's fair as the best specimen of the Polite Gentleman on the terrestrial globe."

Greeley and Richardson continued their squatter life together for ten days, until June 21, while the *Tribune* editor mended from his wounds and exposures to mountain mules. During the time one of their visitors was Little Raven, a chief of the band of nearly a thousand Arapahoes then camped in the cottonwood bottoms. Richardson felt Little Raven was "the nearest approximation I ever met to the Ideal Indian," with a "fine manly form and a human, trustworthy face." On one of his calls the Arapaho indicated the lame Greeley lying on the bunk and wanted to know who he was.

"I reply," Richardson wrote, "that he is a great chief and named the 'Goose Quill,' endeavoring to explain that his realm and authority are purely intellectual, but giving up in despair when the Raven interrupts me to ask how many horses he owns!"

Toward the end of his stay "Goose Quill" dispatched to the *Tribune* his candid analysis of newborn Denver:

. . . I apprehend that there have been, during my two weeks sojourn, more brawls, more fights, more pistol-shots with criminal intent in this log city of one hundred and fifty dwellings, not three-fourths completed nor two-thirds inhabited, nor one-third fit to be, than in any community of no greater numbers on earth. This will be changed in time—I trust within a year, for the empty houses are steadily finding tenants from the two streams of emigration rolling in daily up the Platte on the one hand, down Cherry Creek on the other, including some scores of women and children, who generally stop here, as all of them should; for life in the mountains is yet horribly rough. Public religious worship, a regular mail and other civilizing influences, are being established; there is a gleam of hope that the Arapahoes—who have made the last two or three nights indescribably hideous by their infernal war-whoops, songs and dances—will at last clear out on the foray against the Utes they have so long threatened, diminishing largely the aggregate of drunkenness and riot, and justifying expectations of comparative peace. . . .⁴

As his visit to Denver drew to a close Greeley's regular visitors, along with Little Raven, must have included the men of the *News*: the omnipresent Byers, who certainly would not have left the distinguished visitor unattended; Byers' cantankerous partner, Thomas Gibson; John L. Dailey, who, like Richardson, was a friend and admirer of Little Raven. Dailey had buttonholed Greeley up in Gregory Gulch on June 9 and sold him a subscription to the *News*. It was characteristic of the man.

⁴Greeley, op. cit., p. 159.

While everyone else was going half mad over gold in terms of thousands and tens of thousands of dollars, or spouting purple oratory about the future of a new Western empire, Dailey was willing to devote a few down-to-earth minutes to the matter of a five-dollar subscription for a newspaper badly in need of subscribers. Byers forever was the high-level thinker, the visionary, the head dreamer in councils of dreamers; he was the man who served on committees, drafted memorials to Congress, commanded guards of honor, and greeted visiting dignitaries. The practical Dailey never lost sight of the fact that someone had to keep shop and get the paper out, although he, too, tried his luck at mining on the side.

Probably some of the callers at the Greeley-Richardson cabin also were News printers—men like W. W. Whipple or young Charlie Semper. In that day the line of legitimate birth was less sharply drawn between the back shop and the editorial room than it came to be later. Printers—"typos," they called themselves—were Fourth Estaters too; they were conceded membership in the human race and were admitted to the exalted presence of the scribbling colleagues whose spelling they regularly corrected. As a typo who, at least for a few grand hours, had elevated himself to the choirs of editors, "Jolly Jack" Merrick surely must have dropped in to pay his respects to the convalescent *Tribune* chief. Ever since the brief moment of his *Cherry Creek Pioneer*, Jack had fluctuated between gold chasing in the hills and picking type for the News. He was one of many whom fortune eluded, but he was a good printer, and John Dailey always had an opening for him. Merrick had a prominent place in the early days of the News; he was rated a good shot with a rifle, and when the chips were down he proved himself a handy man to have around. He became the first president of Denver Typographical Union No. 49, the city's second oldest surviving institution, and served as one of several vice-presidents of the initial people's convention—in session concurrent with Greeley's visit—to demand statehood for the Pike's Peak territory. On October 24, 1859, he was elected marshal of the provisional territory of Jefferson. When, a few months later, a bloody business began at Fort Sumter, Merrick trekked back across the plains to enlist in an Illinois regiment of volunteers. He never returned to Colorado.

One of Jack Merrick's closest friends—both are described as "convivial" in the annals—was George West. Like Merrick, West became a leading figure in the early affairs of Denver and the region and a pioneer of Colorado journalism. He was one of the printers called upon to set into type the history-hinging words of Greeley, Richardson, and Villard for the brown-paper extra. Many years later, as the twentieth century dawned, West gave his version of the occasion to the curator of the Colorado State Historical Society:

According to my recollection it was the 10th of June [Friday], 1859, that it was printed, but it might have been dated the next day [it was]. My party had just arrived from across the plains and about noon were pulling through the sand of Cherry Creek at the Blake street crossing, twenty or thirty teams of us, when we heard a shout from a man standing on a little foot bridge which crossed the creek at that point. It proved to be old man Gibson of The News.

"Hey therel" he ejaculated, "are there any printers in this crowd?"

I told him there were two or three of us. He then asked us to go into camp and come up and set up an extra for him. As we were uncertain about what we were going to do even now that we had reached "Pike's peak," we concluded to do as he requested. Bill Summers, Mark Blunt, late of Pueblo, and I went to the office, then located in a one-and-a-half-story log cabin on Ferry street, now Eleventh street, where we found Horace Greeley, A. D. Richardson and Henry Villard, who had just returned from the mountains, and the News wanted to publish their report in an extra. We then buckled to, set it up and worked off, I believe, 500 copies on the old Washington hand press, the handle of which you have in your collection. For this we received five pennyweight of gold dust.

Now old man Gibson is dead, Horace Greeley is dead, A. D. Richardson is dead, Bill Summers and Mark Blunt are dead, leaving only Mr. Byers, Mr. Villard and myself as survivors of that wonderful coterie to whom the world owes so much for the production of that celebrated extra.⁵

Like many another aging fifty-niner, George West by 1900 was taking his pioneerhood very seriously, but if he overestimated the importance of events in which he had a hand, the local record speaks well and often of him without need of a glossing. After a few months on the News, West moved out to Golden in the foothills and on December 4, 1859, published the *Western Mountaineer*, Colorado's third newspaper if Merrick's short-lived *Pioneer* is not reckoned in the tally. Sponsor of the *Mountaineer* was the Boston Company, founders of Golden in the picture-postcard valley formed between flat-topped Table Mountain and the first upslope of the Rockies. Located on Clear Creek and some fifteen miles nearer than Denver to the riches of Gregory Gulch and Jackson's Diggings, Golden at the time was heralded as a rival to Auraria-Denver City in metropolitan importance, and it later would be, briefly, the capital of Colorado Territory. It was not named for its proximity to mineral wealth but for Thomas Golden, a friend of George A. Jackson, who had made the placer strike upstream at present Idaho Springs.

West suspended his *Mountaineer* early in 1860 in order to make a trip east to buy more printing equipment, but he was back in business at Golden on June 28 with a pair of distinguished editorial associates. One was Albert Deane Richardson, now back in the Rockies as a full-

⁵Smiley, *History of Denver*, p. 280.

fledged New York *Tribune* correspondent (thanks probably to his intimate association with Greeley the previous summer). The other was Thomas Wallace Knox, then writing for the Boston *Atlas and Bee*. Like Richardson, Knox soon would become one of the most famous of Civil War reporters. He would be court-martialed for writing in the New York *Herald* that General Sherman was insane during the affair at Chickasaw Bayou. It would require the intercession of President Lincoln for him to get his credentials back from the indignant, press-hating Union Army.⁶

Although they held themselves high as "specials" for big Eastern newspapers, Knox and Richardson were happy to pick up odd change by helping West fill the columns of his lively little *Mountaineer*. Politics was crowding their dispatches out of the papers in Boston and New York anyway. The Lincoln-Douglas-Breckinridge-Bell contest was requiring a lot of journalistic supervision, as was the mounting storm over slavery. The *Tribune's* Charles A. Dana wrote Richardson that his Western stuff was piling up in the overset and he wanted no more "leisurely accounts of travel or buffalo hunting or mining camp brawls." The gold rush was "played out" as news, Dana said, "unless there is some really big bonanza discovery." Knox received similar down-play orders from his managing editor at the *Atlas and Bee*. In this situation West's revived *Mountaineer* offered a handy outlet for two of the most restless pens of the era. Moreover, if Golden City prospered, as nearly everyone—particularly members of the Boston Company—predicted, perhaps they could help build the *Mountaineer* into a challenger of the *Rocky Mountain News* for newspaper supremacy in the Rockies.

Editor Byers, in Denver, did not appear to be worried by the threat. Richardson and Knox were his friends; he admired them and probably envied their distinction as big-time journalists from back east. West, too, was a friend and had been a good and faithful employee. So Byers gave the *Mountaineer* a generous send-off in the *News* of July 4, 1860:

The first number of the second volume of our sprightly contemporary at Golden City, reached our table on Friday last. It is out in a span new dress, worked on a new press, and in every respect a model newspaper. Our Golden City friends and the public generally should bestow on it a liberal patronage, for which they will richly receive their money's worth. Geo. West, editor and proprietor. Terms five dollars per year.

Despite the *News's* good wishes and a highly talented staff, the *Mountaineer* weakened and died with its December 20, 1860, issue. Several months earlier both Knox and Richardson had left Golden and served briefly in Denver on the staff of the *News* before the big story of the rebellion called them east to fame and glory as war reporters. George West also faced east, but as a soldier rather than a newspaperman.

⁶Emmet Crozier, *Yankee Reporters: 1861-65* (New York, 1956), pp. 297-305.

He became a captain in the 2nd Colorado Infantry. When the war ended, West returned to Denver and in August 1865 joined the staff of the *News* as "local" or city editor. In September 1866 he withdrew from the *News* and founded in Golden the *Colorado Transcript*, a weekly which is still being published. For about nine months in 1875 West printed a daily edition of the *Transcript* for circulation in Denver. Later he served a two-year term as adjutant general of Colorado, led an expedition against marauding Utes, and always thereafter was known as "General" West. He survived, full of years and honors as soldier and editor, well into the twentieth century.

His distinguished early associate, Richardson, who was strongly drawn to the West and its rough ways, made still another trip to Denver after the Civil War was over in company with Schuyler Colfax, then Speaker of the House of Representatives (for whom a principal Denver street was named), William Bross of the *Chicago Tribune*, and Samuel Bowles of the Springfield, Massachusetts, *Republican*. In the latter pages of *Beyond the Mississippi* Richardson expressed his amazement at the changes which had come to the squalid settlements and wild country he had known five years earlier. Denver had "grown up through great tribulation," he wrote. Seventy thousand acres of farm land were under cultivation, and the Colorado mines had deposited twelve and a half millions in gold with the mint.

At my last visit, five years before, Civilization had barely extended to these wilds the tips of her gracious fingers. Now Denver boasted a population of five thousand, and many imposing buildings. The hotel bills-of-fare did not differ materially from those in New York or Chicago. Single building lots had commanded twelve thousand dollars. One firm had sold half a million dollars worth of goods in eight months.

With fresh memories of the log-cabins, plank tables, tin cups and plates, and the fatal whisky of 1859, I did not readily recover from my surprise on seeing libraries and pictures, rich carpets and pianos, silver and wine—on meeting families with the habits, dress and surroundings of the older States. Keenly we enjoyed the pleasant hospitalities of society among the quickened intelligences and warmed hearts of the frontier. Western emigration makes men larger and riper, more liberal and more fraternal.

The mountain view from the city impressed me as more grand and beautiful than ever. . . .⁷

Richardson noted that there were now "six or seven daily newspapers" being published for the 5000 people of Denver and the 30,000 permanent residents of the new Colorado Territory. The *Rocky Mountain News* had acquired competition. It began with "old man Gibson" and the

⁷Richardson, op. cit., p. 333.

almost toy-size *Cherry Creek Pioneer* press acquired from Jack Merrick in the swap for a grubstake.

Thomas Gibson came west from Fontanelle, Nebraska, as a partner in the *News* venture with some background in newspapering.⁸ He was a printer-editor and for a time had published the *Quincy, Illinois, Whig*, described as "a notable political sheet." Nearly everyone who remembers Gibson in contemporary memoirs describes him as a difficult man. Before the *News* was a month old he and Byers were quarreling violently. In a huff, Gibson stalked off to the Gregory Diggings on May 17, 1859, with John Dailey, P. W. Case, and "Pap" Hoyt of the *News* staff. He and Dailey and others commuted back and forth between the gulch and Auraria, alternating between chasing gold and getting out the *News*, for the next two months, but relations between the cranky Englishman and the often bullheaded Byers did not improve. The July 13 entry in John Dailey's diary says:

Gibson staid with us tonight [at Mountain City] & he proposed to sell his interest in the printing office to me for \$500, \$250 to be paid when possession is given and the balance in 6 mo from that time. I studied over it & by morning concluded to accept his offer.

Next day Dailey and Gibson went down to Denver "& we drew writings of the agreement between us & I went on down to work. The \$250 is to be paid down about the 8th of August, and I to take his place in the office." It was Gibson's contention that Dr. Gilbert Monell, third partner in the *News*, had forfeited his interest by failing to come through to Pike's Peak with the paper supplies. Gibson was offering Dailey a half interest, and thereby was placing a valuation of a thousand dollars on the total assets, good will, and hopes of future glory of the struggling little hand-printed newspaper.

Hitches developed in the deal, however. Byers had made a quick trip back to Omaha in July to bring out his wife and their two children. While in Omaha he withdrew from the real estate firm of Poppleton & Byers and bought out Dr. Monell's third interest in the *News*. He had confidence in the future of his paper, if Gibson didn't. Arriving back in Auraria on August 7, he discovered that instead of the two-thirds interest he thought he had acquired he was faced with a contract which would leave him with only half. The already strained relationship with Gibson was not improved. Gibson trotted up to Mountain City, where Dailey was hitting as high as seventy-two dollars a day in his sluices, and the printer-pro prospector noted in his journal: "He said that the arrangement between him and myself was not altogether agreeable to Mr. Byers, and that it would be necessary for me to go with him to town on Saturday."

⁸Morton, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 277.

Back in Denver, Dailey found that "G. was anxious to have our bargain concluded tonight & wanted me to go over & have the papers made out before I saw Byers, which I objected to & went over to the Potluck house to see him. He didn't talk to suit me in regard to the difference between he & G & I concluded to have no more to do with it." Next day, while Dailey was working in the printing office, "B & G had a little spat . . . but arrived at no conclusions." "I told G today," Dailey says in his diary, "that as the thing stood between him and B I could have nothing more to do with it. So it stood till in the evening, when B spoke to me alone proposing certain things to G in the morning & if he was agreeable to buy him out. So it rested till morning." The diary entry for August 15 says:

Made proposition to G, he accepted & we immediately proceeded to have writings drawn, which was hurriedly done by Gen. Larimer in order that G. might be prepared to start on the stage at 6: for the States.

The "certain things" that Byers proposed to Dailey as a means of hastening Gibson on his way are not of record, but henceforth the two men were associated as principal owners of the *News* for eleven years. The change of ownership notices appeared in the *News* for August 20:

NOTICE OF DISSOLUTION.

The co-partnership heretofore existing between Wm. N. Byers, G. C. Monell and Thomas Gibson, in the publication of the Rocky Mountain News, is this day dissolved by mutual consent.

Auraria, K.T. August 15, 1859 Wm. N. Byers & Company

NOTICE OF COPARTNERSHIP.

We have this day entered into copartnership, under the name and style of Wm. N. Byers & Co. for the purpose of carrying on the publication of the Rocky Mountain News.

Auraria, K.T. August 15, 1859 Wm. N. Byers
Jno. L. Dailey

In the midst of squabbling with Byers and dickering with Dailey, Gibson had established Colorado's second newspaper. He and his son took Merrick's miniature *Pioneer* press up to Mountain City on July 28, and on August 6 they issued from George Aux's half-completed log cabin the first number of the *Rocky Mountain Gold Reporter and Mountain City Herald*. The paper's tenure was scarcely longer than its name. It lasted until October, when Gibson returned to Omaha, announcing he would be back to resume the *Reporter* in the spring. On his way down from the mountains he sold the much-traveled Mormon press to George

West, who used it to start his *Western Mountaineer* at Golden in December.

Gibson returned in 1860 but not to Mountain City, and the *Reporter* did not report again. Instead Gibson remained in Denver and conjured up even rougher competition for his onetime partner, Bill Byers. He had brought with him a new and extensive printing plant, and on May 1 he came forth with the *Daily Herald and Rocky Mountain Advertiser*, Colorado's first daily newspaper, followed on May 5 by the weekly *Rocky Mountain Herald*. Gibson had as silent partner in his enterprise none other than William Gilpin, frontiersman of high standing, a potent leader in civic affairs, and the man who would be chosen the following year as the first territorial governor of Colorado.

The combination of high-placed connections and a daily rate of issue made the *Herald* formidable opposition. It was the first of many threats to the supremacy and continued life of the *News*. In good time Byers would take full measure of the *Herald*, but in the summer of 1860 he had to reckon with Gibson's new sheet as a lively foe. The prior bitterness between the ex-partners did little to keep the competition on a high plane of journalistic endeavor. They jabbed each other with editorial barbs, indulged freely in personalities, trotted out adjectives smelling of brimstone. The two editors brawled over a public printing contract in a battle which echoed into the halls of Congress. Gibson delighted in solemnly announcing that the venerable *News* had grown old and tired and would give up its ghost with the next succeeding issue. The tactic left Byers fuming.

The newspaper business was getting brisk at Cherry Creek. Something had to be done.

Fortunately Byers and Dailey were in a position to do it. Their paper had gained modestly in strength during the past year, and there had even been an infusion of new money and talent. Two Chicago newspapermen, Horace E. ("Hod") Rounds and Edward Bliss, arrived in town at midsummer intending to start a newspaper. Bliss was the founder in 1844 of the *Genesee Courier* of Leroy, New York, and later had worked as a printer in Racine, Wisconsin, before becoming managing editor in 1857 of the *Chicago Sunday Leader*, owned by "Hod" Rounds' brother Sterling.

After surveying the situation, Bliss and Rounds abandoned their plans for another paper and joined with Byers and Dailey to form the *News* Printing Company. They continued as part of the *News* staff and management until the spring of 1863. Subsequently Bliss ranged far and colorfully in a notable journalistic career. He published papers in Africa, South America, and Australia.

After quitting the press in Colorado, he went to England, and there for a time held a position on the *London World*. Many years prior to

this he accompanied Bayard Taylor through Lapland, Labrador and the frozen North in search of knowledge for the *New York Tribune*, and had twice made the circuit of the earth. As a correspondent for the *New York Herald* he had traveled on foot the Russian possessions [Alaska] and British North America. He had lived on crackers and cheese in a New York garret while writing squibs at a penny a line, and again had dined with Washington Irving on the Hudson, and with Mr. Thackeray in the London club rooms. . . . He went out to the Crimean War with the British troops and witnessed the fall of Balaklava; was with the same army in the campaign in China. He had written several small volumes in his day, but invariably let the publishers get away with the profits.⁹

Bliss and Rounds brought an outfit with them from Chicago. Byers and Dailey ordered more equipment. Then, with six presses in the plant, the *News* became a daily on August 27, 1860. The weekly also was continued, and in fact more care apparently was lavished on its preparation than on the daily edition. But the paper now was "metropolitan" in stature. Let Gibson and his *Herald* fire away; the *News* could reply, salvo for salvo. The situation was back in hand—except that it had grown more complex. The *News* had missed by two days becoming Denver's second daily. For a ragtag bobtail boom town with a highly fluid population of a few thousand persons, Denver was getting the saturation treatment from the press.

On August 25, John C. Moore, then mayor of Denver City, and James T. Coleman brought out the *Daily Mountaineer* (not to be confused with George West's hapless *Western Mountaineer* out in Golden), which also had a weekly edition. Although the town by then was a consolidated city, the old Auraria-Denver City rivalry died hard, and the *Daily Mountaineer* had its origin in the lingering bitterness between what now were officially West Denver and East Denver. Byers had located his *News* on the Auraria side of the creek, although he now occupied a new plant built on stilts in the very bed of the stream. This was billed as "neutral ground," although it actually was southwest of the dividing line and still in what had been Auraria. Gibson's *Herald* also was being published on the Auraria side. East Denver still didn't really have its own newspaper. As has been noted, the Denver City Town Company had offered Byers twenty-four city lots if he would move across Cherry Creek, and then dangled ten lots before Albert D. Richardson in an unsuccessful effort to bait him into bucking the *News*. The line dividing the settlements now was a myth, except in the patriotic breasts of the East Denver town fathers. They offered the ten lots again, and Coleman and Moore accepted.

The *Daily Mountaineer* started out as a Democratic paper in a country

⁹Denver *Republican*, Sept. 13, 1883; quoted in McMurtrie and Allen, op. cit., n. 20fn.

which was swarming with Lincoln Republicans. As events moved toward cannon fire at Fort Sumter it became an out-and-out secession journal. It did not prosper; the bulk of the Pike's Peakers were Midwesterners or Yankees. In May of 1861, Coleman, then its remaining publisher, sold the *Mountaineer* to Byers. Both Coleman and Moore became officers in the Confederate Army. Byers has left a record of the closing of the transaction:

. . . When we agreed upon the terms of the purchase the editor of the *Mountaineer* took a rebel flag that was sticking in his desk and another one that was in the office and said "I suppose you don't want this" and I said "I haven't any use for that" and so he took them down. . . .¹⁰

With the *Mountaineer* disposed of, the *News* could give its undivided attention to trading adjectives with Gibson's *Herald*. One of the bitterest of the fights arose over the contract for public printing let by the new territory of Colorado. Bliss was the standard-bearer for the *News*.

When the first territorial legislature met in 1861 it was dominated by Republicans. Byers was a party stalwart. Bliss promptly was elected public printer. But Gibson got the ear of the new territorial secretary, Lewis Ledyard Weld, and the printing contract was given to the *Herald* office. The contract was important in both money and prestige to the two journals, and they fought for it. The *News* had strongly supported Hiram P. Bennet as unofficial delegate to Congress from the provisional Jefferson Territory. Bennet was in Washington; the *News* demanded he see to it that the federal government make good on the Colorado legislature's selection of Bliss as public printer. Secretary of State William H. Seward—who, in view of other things on his mind at the time, must have been mightily annoyed by the picayune squabble—came to a Solomon's decision and ordered Weld to divide the printing between the *News* and the *Herald*. Distances and distractions being what they were, Weld cheerfully ignored the order and continued to use only the *Herald* plant. The *News* dispatched Bliss to Washington, where he swore out an affidavit against Weld, and the plagued Seward this time ordered Weld to turn over the printing to the *News*. Seeking to justify his disobedience, Weld adopted a tactic which has had some polished applications in modern times; he impugned the loyalty of his opponent. The *News*, he wrote Seward, was

not a sheet reputable in this community either for honesty of purpose or loyalty to the government. Under an outside garb of devotion to the Union, there is very strong reason to believe that it is venal to the last degree—and it has always been, as it now is, the open apologist

¹⁰Byers, Bancroft ms., Pac ms L8.

for the worst and most dangerous class of people in our midst. Its columns daily abound in the most virulent personal abuse of the Federal officers of this Territory—and one of the most prominent writers for its pages is a man who was driven from the City of St. Joseph, Missouri, as a rebel & a traitor. . . .

The charges were wholly without foundation. Byers was a Lincoln man from the beginning, and the Johnny Reb on the staff is unidentifiable. True, the *News* had been attacking Weld vigorously in the fashion of the day, which was scarcely impersonal, and it had opposed the financial policies of Governor Gilpin. The *Herald*, of course, was supporting Gilpin, who a few months later was removed from office by Lincoln for some of the same actions the *News* had been labeling "ruinous."

Weld, however, resigned his post a month after his smear, and his successor, Samuel H. Elbert, at last gave the printing to the *News*.¹¹ The fight had been won, and in the course of it the *News* picked up more ammunition for its campaign, begun in the first issue, demanding statehood for Colorado. Carpetbagging federal appointees like Weld should never again be allowed to override so callously the will of the sovereign people as expressed through the noble organ of their elected legislature.

Gibson's *Herald* did not long survive the defeat. He had taken O. McCraney, a Republican leader, into the firm and changed the name on May 25, 1861, to the *Colorado Republican and Rocky Mountain Herald*, but McCraney withdrew a few months later. Gibson held out alone until July 10, 1862, when he again changed the name of his paper, this time to the *Commonwealth and Republican*, daily and weekly, with O. J. Hollister and Lew Weld, ally in the printing squabble, as editors. At the end of December 1863, Gibson sold out to Simeon Whiteley, who, it was understood, had the backing of the second territorial governor, John Evans, a close friend of Byers'. Gibson returned to Omaha and figured no more in the newspaper annals of Denver. He had helped start three Colorado newspapers, and the only one to endure was the one he deserted.

Of the original *News* pioneers, only Byers and Dailey now were left to fight new battles with drouth and deadbeats, grasshoppers, Indians, and competitors in the years ahead.

Although they did not always agree, Byers and Dailey complemented each other admirably. Dailey was a gangling six-footer, Byers shorter and inclined to portliness, particularly as the years advanced. Dailey had an enormous capacity for loyalty and diligence. He sometimes worked all day and then through until dawn getting the paper out. He kept tab

¹¹The *News-Herald* printing controversy is documented in William Hanchett, *Politics and Patronage in Territorial Colorado*, unpublished doctoral dissertation, Colorado State University, Fort Collins, 1955.

on the printers' lost time, baby-sat the Byers children, dipped often into his own pocket for small loans to his partner, who was continually caught short. Byers needed someone exactly like Dailey. The editor was gone from Denver much of the time. When he was in town he was too busy at high-level politicking, attending public functions, and empire building to be bothered with the day-to-day practicalities of printing a newspaper. He was a policy maker. Byers, of course, became the prominent one, and in the Dailey diaries there are traces of envy of his partner's many distinctions and of annoyance with his ceaseless perambulations. But between the two of them—one faithfully tending shop; one dreaming no dreams that were small-sized—the *News* appeared regularly and grew steadily in stature and solvency.

When Jerome Smiley described Byers as "our ranking pioneer" he was granting the distinction with more than usual precision. William Newton Byers was born a pioneer, and he lived most of his life as a frontiersman in seven states. The only city he knew, aside from those he visited on his travels, was the one he built.

His father, Moses Watson Byers, son of one veteran of the Revolution and grandson of another, was among the first settlers to put the plow to the Darby plains in Ohio. Moses Byers was of Scotch-Presbyterian ancestry. His wife, Mary Ann Brandenburg, came of a German family who also arrived early in Ohio and took up land in the Miami Valley. The Byerses originally stopped at Circleville in Pickaway County, but Moses moved on to Madison County, near West Jefferson, where he claimed and developed three hundred acres. William Newton Byers was born on February 22, 1831, the first of six children. He lived the life of a fringe-land farm boy, with almost no opportunity for schooling. But he was a reader, and most of the education he acquired was worked out laboriously from the pages of books he borrowed or begged. When the farm work was completed late in the autumn of 1848, Bill was given the rare opportunity of a short semester in the new academy at West Jefferson. Along with the rudiments of a few basic subjects he picked up a working knowledge of practical surveying. It would become his trade, although at seventeen he was helping his father fill a contract for ties for the Cleveland, Columbus & Cincinnati Railroad.

In 1850, Ohio had become too congested for Moses Byers, and he took his family west to Muscatine on the Mississippi in the newly admitted state of Iowa. The next year his son pushed even farther west, joining a federal survey party as chainman and compassman. Although he was not yet twenty-one, Byers was named deputy United States surveyor for Iowa and assisted in the running of many of the original section lines in the western part of the state. Early in 1852 he was back in Muscatine, helping his father with slaughtering and lumbering. The earliest of his surviving pocket diaries is for this year, and it pictures a young man highly competent in the wide variety of skills which frontier

life demanded. He could build a gristmill and grind meal, tap trees and make sugar, construct a log sled or a wheelbarrow, put up a house for a neighbor. In April he was back at his surveying near Kanesville, working for a Mr. Bumgardner. The memo pages at the end of Byers' diaries often carry bits of poetry he liked and lists of books he wanted to buy when the cash was available. In the 1852 journal he jots down the following desired volumes: *Stoddard's Complete Ready Reckoner*, *The Philopene Cong-ster*, *Forget Me Not*, *True Love Knots*, and *Paper Bullets from Love's Pocket Pistol*, which treatise was available for twelve and a half cents from Stearns & Company, booksellers, at 202 Williams Street, New York City. He also notes, with a little uncertainty, a bit of Pope he wanted to remember:

Health { exists } of with Temperance alone
 { consists }
 And Peace, O virtue is
 all thine one.

Byers was now twenty-one, the mysteries of love were beginning to trouble him, and, like many another idealistic and perfectionist young man his age, he had firmly committed his conscience to temperance, truth, and high moral living.

Byers did not return home from Kanesville. Instead he signed on with Messrs. Donnellan and Cannon of Dubuque for overland passage to Oregon and California. The party set out May 5 and on May 9 crossed the Missouri at the old Mormon "Winter Quarters," later Florence, Nebraska, and that night was visited by friendly Pawnees. Traveling behind ox teams, Byers and his companions toiled up the Platte Valley. On May 25 they began to encounter emigrant trains from St. Joseph and Independence, coming up the southern route and reporting cholera back down the trail. On June 6 they had reached Scotts Bluff, where Byers heard how the landmark was named: "A party of mountaineers were returning to the states, their provisions were exhausted; they were nearly starving. One named Scott was taken sick and begged his comrades to leave him and take care of themselves. They did so. Afterwards a human skeleton was found here, supposed to be Scott." The expedition passed Fort Laramie in present Wyoming on June 9 and on July 1 was at South Pass, ready to drop down into the Pacific watershed. Byers wrote in his diary:

. . . Craggy precipices, rocky steep, mountain gorges and everything awful as connected with the South Pass in the minds of emigrants, are all humbug; gentle rolling prairie surrounded it on every side; in short it seems nature intended this as the gateway of the great highway of nations. . . . Commencing the descent four miles brought us to Pacific

Springs, the first water flowing to the west and one of the sources of Green River, the great Colorado of the west. . . . Here we camped; grass scarce; plenty of sage. . . .

The Byers party took the Sublette cutoff, passed by Fort Hall in present Idaho, and after a hundred and forty-five days of travel reached Oregon.¹² By October, Byers was cutting, rafting, and milling logs up the river from Portland, but in December returned to surveying as an employee of Joseph Hunt, deputy U.S. surveyor, in the area around La Fayette. Again he was involved in the laying out of the first section lines in a Western state. His diary for December 28 records: "Started up the second tier of sections." Within a few months he was running the first township boundaries in what would become the state of Washington. The diary for 1853 carries traces of a young man's homesickness, and it dreamily remembers in verse a girl back home in Iowa:

I think of thee
When through the trees
Sound symphonies
Of nightingales.
When dost thou think of me?

I think of thee
At Evening's blink
Beside the brink
Of Shady well.
Where dost thou think of me?

I think of thee
with anguish sweet
With longing fears
and ardent tears.
How dost thou think of me?

O think of one
Until beneath
A better star
We meet. Though far
I think alone of thee.

The book list for the year includes: *A Complete Dictionary of Poetical Quotations*, *History of the World* by Henry Bill, Wilson's *Ornithology*. He reminds himself to look up the words to "Old Folks at Home" and "Home, Home" at first opportunity.

¹²Byers' journal of his trip has recently been republished by Byron G. Hooper, Jr., in his *Overland News* (Denver), Vol. 1, Nos. 10, 11, and 12 (May, June, and July-Aug. 1958).

By November of 1853 the survey work was completed, or Byers had had enough of it. He settled up with Hunt for a \$250 compass, \$550 in cash, and "balance on account." Then he sailed from St. Helena on November 15 for San Francisco. "Farewell to Oregon. Thy lofty mountains. Thy noble rivers & magnificent waterfalls. Thy green & pleasant plains & flowering hillsides. I bid you all adieu." But next day: "'A life on the ocean wave' how I detest it, this horrible seasickness." Two days later the ship, the *Columbia*, was off the Golden Gate but "shut out by fog." On the nineteenth: "Beat about all day in the fog without knowing where." Byers landed in San Francisco on the twentieth, and the next day's entry reads: "Looking around over the city, with which I was agreeably disappointed. In the evening went to the San Francisco Theater." The diarist spent the most of the rest of the month on a side excursion to the California gold country. He visited "Sackramento"—"a brisk pleasant place and a beautiful situation"—and "Colomo," where he saw Sutter's Mill, scene of the first gold discovery. Back in San Francisco, he attended the theater again, and on December 1 set sail abroad the *Sierra Nevada* for Acapulco, the bay of San Juan del Sud, and a muleback trip across Nicaragua to the Caribbean. He arrived in New York on Christmas Eve aboard the steamer *Northern Light* and calculated the passage at "2100 ms. in 8 days & 2 hours." The boy who knew three different frontiers at the age of twenty-three opened his eyes wide to the gaslit wonder-world of the big city. He visited the Crystal Palace, went to a "Georama of the Holy Land"—"a very interesting exhibition"—and looked in on P. T. Barnum's Museum, where they were playing *Hot Corn*. But he didn't tarry long, and as the year ended he was home in Muscatine. Four days later he was helping slaughter hogs.

Through the winter, spring, and summer Byers helped out around the farm. He heard the prairie chickens drumming on February 21, built a chimney, planted fruit trees and an Osage orange hedge, shingled the smokehouse, and whitewashed the Byers home. He cut wheat, cradled oats, and went fishing. For entertainment there were always two meetings at church each Sunday, morning and evening, and someone came to town to deliver lectures on the new science of phrenology. Byers attended twice. But there were other developments, too, and the strictly high-minded level on which they unfolded is perhaps suggested by the clipping of a poem tucked in the 1854 diary opposite the page for March 15: "What a lovely morning," Byers exulted. "Robbins, Doves, Larks, Bluebirds, Blackbirds & Jays and the Chickens keep up their 'Boo hoo.'" The poem reads:

Something in every part of thee
To praise, to love, I find;

But dear as is thy form to me,
Still dearer is thy mind.

On May 7, Byers rented a carriage and went to a meeting at the High Prairie schoolhouse. Miss Sumner was beside him, and Mr. and Mrs. E. M. Kessinger went along as chaperones. A week later Byers again was a customer at the livery stable: "Took the girls to the country and returned to town with Miss Sumner. Spent a *very* pleasant evening." He underscored the "very." There were other bosky idyls, and apparently an understanding of intentions had been reached when Byers left on September 5 for Nebraska Territory. He crossed over the Missouri to Omaha City, "a pretty place," on September 15, found employment as a surveyor, and built a house. He also took out land claims in the area and on September 22 participated in a council with Chiefs Standing Hawk, Yellow Smoke, and White Cow. On September 23 he helped organize and was elected secretary of the Papao Claim Association.¹³ In his free time he hung out at the Big Six, a popular eating house and saloon owned by William Clancy, who, like Byers, later would go to Pike's Peak and for whom a downtown Denver street was named briefly (it is now Tremont Place).¹⁴

Byers quickly made his mark in Omaha, and he became as prominently identified with its early affairs as he became later in the building of another city farther west. The *Omaha Arrow* for September 22, 1854, gave notice of the arrival of

. . . W. N. Byers, formerly of Muscatine, Iowa, an old [Byers was now twenty-three] stager on the Oregon frontier, who brings with him one of the best solar compasses for field surveying in the west. He purposes making our soil his home. . . .¹⁵

On October 27 all the foundations were in place and Byers was ready to make a quick trip back to Muscatine. There on November 16 he was married to Miss Elizabeth Minerva Sumner of nearby West Liberty. The young couple set out the same day for their new home in Omaha, but the honeymoon trip was clouded by at least one untoward incident. They encountered a severe wind storm on November 24, and in the middle of the night the gale ripped off the roof of the house in which they were stopping.

The young transitman helped plat the city of Omaha, drew its first map, laid out its Jeffer's addition, and once again became a deputy U.S. surveyor for a new state. Moreover, on December 12, the happy

¹³Omaha Arrow, Oct. 6, 1854.

¹⁴Arthur C. Wakeley, *Omaha: The Gate City, and Douglas County* (Chicago, 1917), Vol. 1, p. 91; Alfred Sorensen, *The Story of Omaha* (Omaha, 1923), p. 72.

¹⁵Quoted in Sorensen, op. cit., p. 73.

bridegroom was elected a member of the first Nebraska Territory legislature. His cup of happiness was brimful. The diary entry for December 25 says: "Christmas and so nice & pleasant."

The Omaha Arrow having expired, Byers took a card in the *Nebraska Palladium* at Bellevue on January 31, 1855, to advertise his availability:

W. N. Byers
Land Surveyor-Omaha City, Nebraska Territory
Friends, I am again in the field, and at your
service, better supplied with instruments than
formerly.

The following year he joined with his fellow legislator, Andrew J. Poppleton, later a prominent attorney for the Union Pacific Railroad, in a real estate and law partnership. Their ad in the *Nebraska Advertiser* for June 14, 1856, said:

A. J. Poppleton

Wm. N. Byers

Poppleton & Byers
ATTORNEYS AT LAW
And General Land Agents,
Omaha, Nebraska

Land Warrants Bought and Sold
Land Entered on Time

Special attention given to the selection and entry of
Lands of Settlers, and all others desiring choice
locations.

Land Claims, Town Lots and all kinds of Real
estate, bought and sold and investments made for
distant dealers.

Byers and his bride lived for two or three years in the fifth house to be erected in Omaha. It stood on Tenth Street at Farnham, had been built in 1854 by the first sheriff, P. G. Peterson, and it already had acquired a history. Dr. Charles A. Henry had been chained to the floor of the building after his arrest for the killing of George Hollister at Bellevue in an altercation over town lots.¹⁶

At the first town election in March 1857, Byers was chosen as an alderman. Presumably he had a voice in the first ordinance the new city council passed on March 5. The law was aimed at tidying up the town, and it specified that swine no longer would be permitted to run at large.¹⁷

¹⁶Sorensen, *The Early History of Omaha*, p. 202.

¹⁷*Ibid.*, p. 94.

During the following year fevered reports of gold in the Rockies began to make their way east to Omaha. Byers was in a mood to listen to them. The panic had hit. Several of his townsite promotions had collapsed. Why not try his luck farther west, particularly since he already knew the way out there? Byers organized his *Rocky Mountain News* and turned his hopes toward the shining mountains.

Although he had yet to mark his thirtieth birthday, Byers by now had enough of a taste of public prominence and policy making so that henceforth he would take the large and long view of affairs. It was not so much that he felt the nagging, day-to-day details of business were beneath his dignity as that it just didn't seem to occur to him that they required attention and solutions. Fortunately he had the practical-minded John Dailey at his side as the *News* began to make its way. When Byers' one-time associate Thomas Gibson wanted to complain about undercutting of prices on job printing—the *News* and the *Herald* were bitter enemies on everything else, but they had an agreement to hold the line on printers' charges—he knew where to address his ire. On June 7, 1860, Gibson wrote Dailey:

Dear Sir—Your being the practical partner in the firm of W. N. Byers & Co., I address this to you on a subject of vital importance to the profession. Some time since we had an understanding not to run prices of job work down. I have invariably adhered to the prices—\$8 for a 4th sheet etc etc—for 100. Now I have sufficient evidence in two instances that you have fell [sic] considerably from the price. If this is your intention . . . I am fully satisfied I am in a position to do work in my office, with the assistance of my family, at less than you possibly can. I am not to be deceived more than once again. If you think this deserving of attention, I shall be glad to hear from you.

Yours in haste
Thos Gibson¹⁸

Dailey took time that night to note calmly in his diary: "Received an epistle from Father Gibson relative to prices of job work."

The anchor man of the Byers and Dailey team shared Ohio birth with his partner, though they apparently had not met until both reached Omaha. John Dailey was born in Tiffin, Seneca County, on November 19, 1833, the fifth child of a pioneer who had cleared eighty acres of forest and swamp for a farm. At seventeen John became an apprentice printer at Fort Wayne, Indiana, in the office of Thomas Cook, publisher of the *Laurel Wreath of Fort Wayne*, a literary paper which lasted only a year. He completed his apprenticeship under John W. Dawson at the Fort Wayne *Times*, and then at twenty-one struck out further west. In Des Moines he helped issue the first number of the *Iowa Citizen*,

¹⁸Ms. letter in Dailey scrapbook, Denver Public Library.

forebear of the Des Moines *Register*.¹⁹ By 1855 he was on the fringe of civilization in Nebraska Territory, where he lost his savings in a farm and timber claim near Cuming City. His able fingers burned at speculation, he returned them to his trade.

During the winter of 1856-57 he and Henry M. Burt, later the Springfield, Massachusetts, publisher and author, entered into a contract with an Omaha real estate promoter named William N. Byers to go to the proposed new town of Central City, Nebraska Territory, and start a newspaper to be called the *Times*. The panic pulled the rug out from under Byers' project and Central City became a paper town. Everyone left but Dailey, who couldn't. He had cut his foot with an ax while working on a survey party. When he recovered he moved on to Dakota City on the Missouri opposite Sioux City and printed the first issue of the *Herald* there. It also lasted a single year. By that time the *Rocky Mountain News* was being conceived, and Byers wrote him to come down and join in. Dailey was delayed in winding up his affairs, and when he reached Omaha the management interest he had expected was gone, split two ways between Dr. Monell and Thomas Gibson. So he came west as printing foreman and bided his time for the partnership that finally fell to him.

Dailey's activities with the *News* are detailed through many of these pages. In 1864 he interrupted his newspaper labors to enlist in the 3rd Colorado Cavalry, and he was present at the Sand Creek Massacre. He served Bill Byers long and faithfully, and then in October 1870 sold out to him to start his own job-printing business. Retiring in 1874, Dailey dabbled in real estate, served three terms as treasurer of Arapahoe County, gave a quarter century as a member of the school board, and was president in 1893 of the city's first park board. Both he and Byers long had been interested in civic beautification. Together they planted trees along both sides of Broadway from Fifth to Jewell avenues, some of which survived until a few years ago. A brother of Dailey's, William M., also was a Colorado pioneer and an early rancher in Wyoming.²⁰

Dailey was married twice. His first wife, Melissa Rounds of Chicago, died in childbirth less than a year after he brought her to Denver as a bride in 1866. Later he married Helen Emelia Manley, a young widow who was a friend of his first wife and had taught school with her in Chicago. Nellie Dailey was diminutive: five feet, eighty pounds. She also was a very proper person, and didn't like her given name of Helen because there was a "Hel" in it. Four children were born to the Daileys: Anne, Lissie, Grace, and John L., Jr.

John Dailey died in Denver at seventy-four on January 3, 1908, a

¹⁹*The Palimpsest*, State Historical Society of Iowa, Iowa City, Vol. XXX, No. 9 (Sept. 1949), p. 284.

²⁰L. G. Flannery, ed., *John Hunton's Diary: 1873-'75* (Lingle, Wyo., 1956), p. 110.

quiet, conscientious man to the end.²¹ Dailey Park at West Ellsworth Avenue and Cherokee Street is named for him. His son and his daughter Grace still live in Denver, and the old Dailey mansion at West Fourth Avenue and Broadway stands with some time-scarred dignity in a jungle of used-car lots.

²¹Biographical sketches occur in *Rocky Mountain News*, Jan. 4, 1908; Smiley, *History of Denver*, p. 659; Hall, op. cit., Vol. II, pp. 482-83, Vol. III, p. 137; Chapman Publishing Company, *Portrait and Biographical Record of Denver and Vicinity* (Chicago, 1898), pp. 296-97; Century Publishing and Engraving Company, *Encyclopedia of Biography of Colorado* (Chicago, 1901), pp. 437-38; Grace Dailey, typescript, Western Collection, Denver Public Library.

CHAPTER SIX

Boar Fights, Culture, and Bootblacks

JAMES TRUSLOW ADAMS has written that one of the negative contributions of the frontier to the American character was the loss of qualitative values in the quantitative. Size came to be the principal measure of success. "Bigger" was equated so directly with "better" that the popular catch phrase "bigger and better" became redundant.¹ The philosophy lingers in the credos of "service" clubs in every village that wants to be a town, every town on the way to becoming a city. "Boost, don't kick." Boosting is virtue, and criticism—since kickers and gobacks are a threat to physical growth—a sin. This overlay of moral and evaluative judgments on the dynamics of growth Adams saw as a legacy of the frontier; not just of the Rocky Mountain West, of course, but of the successive Wests, each in its turn a little farther out from tidewater than the West was yesterday. Pioneering was hard and often grubby work, and in the materialization of values to the lowest common denominator of growth-serving utility, culture "came to be considered [a] foolish ornament for those who were effeminate in taste and not up to a real man's work." Thus the frontier made leisure a sin also. With some assistance, Adams might have added, from the flinty New England Puritan conscience.

The distinguished historian asks his readers to observe that the first years of any new settlement are years of harsh toil, and historical perspective is achieved only at a cost of distance and disinterest. Growth and the winning of farms, mines, and cities from the wilderness represented the setting of a foundation upon which, eventually, a civilized life could rest. They also represented, in practical terms, survival. It could not often have crossed the minds of men actively engaged in the business of surviving that they might be debasing cultural values or erecting a structure of false virtues. *They* thought they were winning the West, a good and noble thing to do. (And they paused every now and then to preen themselves on it.)

The West's gunplay and violence, the reckless Indian wars, the greed, the pompous empire building, the mining kings romping with their whores, the sometimes pathetic strainings for culture and gentility, the

¹*The Epic of America* (Boston, 1931), pp. 216ff.

moments of elegance rendered all the more striking by contrast and rarity—these things, in the long view, are not important. But they were important to the gun slingers and their victims, to the harried Arapahoes, the soiled doves and their diamond-bearing escorts, to tired, red-handed women who could remember how Sundays were in parlors “back home” on the other side of the Missouri. And certainly to a newspaper, which, above all else, must be contemporary.

The first years are harsh. They were for the *Rocky Mountain News*. They were also violent, scrabbling, vulgar, and touched with glory.

On October 6, 1859, for example, it was a matter of some importance to the *News* that a boar fight, with one hundred spectators, had occurred in the streets. In New York the *Ledger*—again to call into testimony that fascinating journal so unexplainably neglected by social historians—at about the same time was giving publication to the first story written for an American periodical by a promising English writer named Charles Dickens.²

Denver was not entirely a cultural desert of boar fights and three-card monte, however. The same issue of the *News* offered a critique on the town's first theatrical performance, October 3 in Apollo Hall. On the whole, it was stated, the performance was “excellent and unexceptionable.” Had it not been for the miner in the back row who got roostered and interpolated a running commentary, the affair would have been entirely *recherché*. The *News* ended its theatrical review with a public spanking for the drunk: “We are sorry to say that the audience was somewhat disturbed . . . by a drunken man, who is hereby notified that a rigid police is established, and he and all such will be summarily ejected if good order is not kept.”

The show offered Colonel C. B. Thorne, late of Leavenworth, and his company in the two-act play, *Cross of Gold; Or, The Maid of Croisay*. This was followed by *Maggie's by My Side*, described as a “favorite ballade” and sung by Miss Flora Wakely (local talent). “Mlle Haydee” then performed a “favorable dance,” and the evening was rounded out with a “laughable farce” entitled *Two Gregories; Or, Luck in a Name*, the colonel himself in the role of John Bull. Tickets \$1. Doors open 7 P.M., performance at 7:30. “Front seats reserved for the ladies.”

The critic for the *News*—probably editor Byers—was rather more than kind. “Col. Thorne can hardly be excelled in any country and he is most ably supported by his company.” Miss Wakely's singing was “excellent.” Mlle. Haydee had “no superior” as a danseuse. “Our people,” the *News* said, “are most fortunate in the establishment of a theatre at this time . . . to help the long winter months to pass pleasantly. We hope they will see to it that he [Colonel Thorne] receives the patronage he deserves. Performance every evening.”

²The story was “Hunted Down.” It began in the *Ledger* on Aug. 20, 1859.

Deplorable disturbances such as the *News* castigated apparently were not uncommon. Richardson tells in *Beyond the Mississippi* about attending the Apollo one night to see *La Tour de Nesle*, which he said was "performed not much worse than at our ordinary metropolitan theaters."

. . . But the auditors were the real attraction. The entrance fee was a very moderate price for the amusement they afforded. Gaultier agonizingly asked concerning his murdered relative:

"Where, O where is my brother?"

A sepulchral voice from the midst of the house, answered:

"I am thy brother!"

The spectators supposed it a part of the play, but discovering that the response came from a favorite candidate for Congress greeted it with cheer after cheer.

Queen Marguerite with due horror gave the exclamation:

"Then I am lost indeed!"

A miner, directly in front of the stage, responded emphatically:

"You bet."

The tragic death of Marigny, elicited from another spectator:

"Well old fellow, so *you* are gone up too."

And at the tragic close Gaultier, Marguerite and Buridan were greeted with:

"Bound to have a big funeral, aren't you?"⁸

Apollo Hall had been built during the summer by the Barney brothers on the north side of Larimer Street between what are now Fourteenth and Fifteenth streets. It was a two-story frame building with the theater on the second floor. The ground floor was occupied by Harry Gunnell's billiard parlor and saloon, and the sound of clicking billiard balls, clinking glasses, and stag-at-ave songs floated unobstructed up an open stairway to compete with the dramatic presentations. The house accommodated three hundred and fifty persons on rough board benches, and a dozen candles did duty as footlights.

Whatever niceties of fixtures or deportment the Apollo lacked, it was a joy to editor Byers. Throughout his life he was an avid theatergoer. His diaries reveal that on his trips to New York he haunted the playhouses, often attending five plays on as many nights in orgies of drama not unlike those some Colorado tourists indulge in today when they visit Manhattan. (One of the most popular promotions of the contemporary *News* is the "Show Plane," a chartered air liner which whisks parties into New York for a week on Broadway.) Touring dramatic companies which came to Denver's early theaters nearly always could count on support from the *News*, and Byers had even proposed to open his own theater as a side line to his newspaper. The original minutes of the Auraria

⁸Richardson, op. cit., pp. 306-7.

Town Company in the archives of the Colorado State Historical Society show that on January 9, 1860, the "board received proposition from Byers & Co. to build a theatre building and asking for a donation." On January 16, Byers was given eight town lots "with the condition that Byers & Co. erect a theatre in Auraria." Byers did not build his theater, and presumably the lots were forfeited, but he never lost his enthusiasm for the drama. The theaters of Denver progressed in a few years from board benches and candle footlights to opera houses of onyx, mahogany, and plush, and a first night was not official unless Billy Byers sat in the dress circle.

A rustic theater was not the only indication that a foot-shuffling, self-conscious gentility was developing in the Denver of 1859-60. Woman was becoming less and less a natural curiosity, and with the calico and crinoline came the gentling harness for the basic unwashed instincts of the male. A party was held to open the Pollock House on July 9, 1859, and there were twenty-two ladies present, virtually the entire feminine population. "Social parties," the *News* commented on October 20, "are getting very frequent, and in fashionable display, sumptuous fare and unexceptionable [Byers was fond of the word] character, they cannot be excelled 'away down East.'" Taking advantage of the upsurge in high life, a pioneer merchant advertised in the paper that he had for sale collars and cuffs of enameled steel for more or less formal occasions when pistols were to be checked at the door and cut plug resolutely forsworn. A fancy autumn ball was held, and another on January 2 to greet the New Year 1860. The latter was, again, "unexceptionable." It was a "complete success" with "a large number of ladies" in attendance, "and the merry dance was prolonged until a late hour." The *News*—its editors were not yet out of their twenties—luxuriated in the new opportunities for feminine companionship and urged blissfully: "O ladies, do your d—iviness."

The city's first wedding was given public notice in the *News* for October 20, 1859:

MARRIED. In Auraria, K.T., on Sunday, the 16th inst., by Rev. G. W. Fisher, John B. Atkins, of Mt. Clemens, Mich., to Lydia B., eldest daughter of Col. Henry Allen.

"The boys" acknowledge the receipt of a generous supply of cake, the handwork of the fair young bride, and the whole office join in best wishes for long life to the happy couple.

This is the first marriage notice ever published in the Terr. of Jefferson.

Mrs. Byers founded a Ladies' Union Aid Society, and her husband was elected president of a chess club. A. E. Pierce, the city's first news dealer, started a circulating library with a ten-dollar packet of paper-bound books and on February 10, 1860, organized a public library, the

Denver City and Auraria Reading Room and Library Association. A levy of twenty-five cents a month was made on the one hundred members.

Meanwhile, during the summer, a major force toward the taming of the settlements arrived in town wearing a glossy plug hat, a broadcloth Prince Albert, and boiled shirt but driving an ox team with a regulation bull whip. Lavender gloves of fine kid protected his delicate white hands. A favorite local legend insists he was cussing his teams in Latin. The story is unverifiable but likely. Professor Owen J. Goldrick of County Sligo was a scholar of Latin, Greek, orthography, philosophy ("intellectual, moral and natural"), English grammar and composition, trigonometry, both plain and spherical, chemistry, physiology, astronomy and, the pecksniffs added regretfully, of good old Magnolia whiskey. He also was an exponent of literature on its loftiest and most empurpled planes. One of the most colorful figures in the story of early Denver, Owen Goldrick became the town's first schoolmaster, an editor of the *News*, and an unforgettable character. As a young man he wore his whiskers mutton-chop style, joined by a bushy mustache, and his erudition made a profound impression on the rough community. He was promptly awarded the affectionate and respectful lifelong title of "The Professor."

Despite the swath he cut and the debt owed to him by a village wholly untutored until he came, Goldrick has remained a shadowy if prominent figure in Denver history. In recent years an elementary school has been named for him, but the honors due him have been in large part denied. It is apparent that the dissipations of his youth—he was thirty when he made his spectacular entrance into Denver—offended the postured Victorian sensibilities of the late nineteenth century, when the city was selecting pioneers to be canonized as civic heroes. Denver was considerably awed by her "Professor" but also a little shocked by his eccentricities, and no one bothered to find out much about him.

It is not known, for example, where he acquired the learning which dazzled the settlements. For many years it was casually repeated that he was a graduate of Trinity College, Dublin, and later had studied at Columbia University. Neither institution, it finally was discovered, has any record that Goldrick was a student.⁴ His birth date usually is given as 1833, but a letter written from Ireland by his father, Owen, Sr., on December 17, 1848, gives the date as March 31, 1829, and says the baptism occurred April 9.⁵ The younger Owen probably came to America in the early 1840s, although one of his father's letters indicates the boy

⁴Harry M. Barrett, "Early Schools and Teachers," *University of Colorado Bulletin*, Vol. XXXV, No. 11 (Apr. 26, 1935), p. 38.

⁵Much new information on Goldrick has come to light in a collection of family letters of scattered dates now in the possession of his grand-niece, Mrs. L. G. Johnson of Hickory, North Carolina.

may have been shipped to this country in the custody of two older brothers as a lad of five or younger to escape the Irish famines and religious persecution. The elder Owen, a court functionary of some standing, boasted that he could "Talk with Judges with my Hat on after Salutation." Owen, Sr., had led his family into apostasy early in the century and suffered for it. He wrote a friend in America in 1834: ". . . My wife and I are of Roman Catholick Families, and about 30 years ago I met with a Bible by Stealth and saw nothing there for most of popish absurdities. I promulgated my Doubts. The priests attacked me as a Heretick from their Altars and said I went Contrary to 'The Council of Trent which ordained that no Laic should open a Bible' much worse Luthers . . . Bible—Sir I then protested openly against popery and 'all my House'—then we were much persecuted and most of all by our own friends and connections. Then I sent Wm. [the eldest son] to Explore America, and we all intended to follow after him. . . . Sir I beg to refer you to my sons, as to what popery in Ireland is."

Young Owen inherited much of his father's pride and bristling independence, along with a thirst for knowledge. Somehow he acquired at least the rudiments of a classical education, and both he and his brother James became schoolmasters. William was a physician in Reynoldsburgh, Ohio, where he early was hampered in his practice by strong feelings against Irish immigrants, particularly Protestant Irishmen, and often sought to persuade his brothers to go into the grocery business with him. A fourth brother, Patrick, apparently skidded into a life of drink and vice, went off to the Civil War, and never was heard from again.

The desire to teach runs deep in the Goldrick family. Relatives and collateral descendants—Owen, Jr., had no children—have served on the faculties of Ohio State, Illinois, and Hawaii universities and St. John's College in China, and in the public schools of Columbus, Ohio, and Indianapolis. Owen and James opened a "select school" in Middletown, Pennsylvania, in April 1848, and in 1850 Owen was teaching in Dodgeville, Wisconsin. There a delegation of Cornish roughs, suspicious of high-toned eggheads on principle, waited upon him one afternoon and beat him up. Three years later Owen was working as second bookkeeper and salesman in Cincinnati for the publishing and book wholesaling house of Moore, Anderson, Wilstach & Keys. Possibly remembering Cornishmen with sticks and fists, he wrote to James that he would "rather have my place here than 1000 \$ at school teaching, by a long splice!" He was still in Cincinnati in 1855, but he went back to teaching.

Owen drifted on down the Ohio to St. Louis, where he met Joseph B. Doyle, a prosperous plains freighter who had a ranch and trading post on the Santa Fe Trail at Hermosilla in what is now Huerfano County, Colorado. Doyle persuaded the handsome and talented young Irishman to come west as private tutor to the Doyle children on the isolated ranch. S. T. Sopris, who knew Goldrick, wrote that the tutor soon "tired of the

lack of excitement that prevailed in and around Hermosilla, and made his getaway via one of Doyle's ox trains. . . ."⁶ J. B. Doyle & Company had opened a large storehouse in the summer of 1859 at Fifth and Ferry streets (now Eleventh and Larimer streets) in Auraria, and Goldrick came north as one of the bullwhackers in charge of a trainload of goods.

Goldrick's entry into Denver, sun glistening on the silk of his top hat, left a lasting impression, as did the cultural excitement he immediately began to stir up. In September he circulated a petition for a school in the two towns and obtained subscriptions of two hundred and fifty dollars in a few days. Then he put his card in the *Rocky Mountain News*, announcing that he would open a "Union School" on October 3. The *News* lent its weight to the enterprise under a headline, "Westward the Star of Education—as of Empire, Takes its Way."

We hail it as another significant sign of our times and of our future, that a first class school under the charge of a competent professional teacher is already established among us. It is a maxim which for ages has stood the test of time, that popular education is the surest handmaid to a people's welfare, and the cheapest safeguard of its society and liberty, coincident to a healthy civilization. Next to the Church of God, the school is the most useful institution, and the best wealth in any community, and particularly so in this country of ours.

Please notice Card of Professor Goldrick in another column. We have read flattering notices of him as a gentleman and teacher.⁷

As a "local item", the *News* went on to comment: "Professor Goldrick is prepared to 'teach the young idea how to shoot.' Send your children to school."

The Union School opened with thirteen pupils—nine "whites," two Mexicans, and two Indian half-breeds. Professor Goldrick wrote to John D. Philbrick, superintendent of the Boston schools, asking his advice on textbooks. The noted educator was pleased to oblige and also extended fraternal greetings: "And now, imagine my arm extended with the speed of thought from the cradle of the free school on the Atlantic shores, over the Alleghanies, over the 'Father of Waters,' to give you a cordial greeting in your 'Union School' on the frontier of civilization at the foot of the Rocky Mountains." Goldrick was elected in 1861 to a two-year term as the first superintendent of schools in Arapahoe County. He also served as superintendent of schools for Boulder County, 1871-73.

There's a familiar, present-day ring to the *News*' "A Word to Parents" which appeared October 13 in further support of the new school:

⁶S. T. Sopris, "Some Early-Day Reminiscences," *Trail*, Vol. VII, No. 2 (July 1914), p. 5.

⁷*Rocky Mountain News*, Sept. 29, 1859.

Now that we have a good school in operation among us, with suitable furniture, black boards, etc., for the convenience of all grades of pupils, and gotten up by the teacher, individually, regardless of expense, we ask the special attention of parents to encourage the enterprise with their timely patronage. A school is not like a watch or clock, which you can start and then leave it, to go of itself. It is an organized living body. It has sensibilities and expenses, and it craves sympathy and support. Of all human institutions it is at once, the most useful, the most responsible, the most difficult, and the most delicate. It is a principle, that in judiciously educating the young; you serve them the most effectually possible not by what you do for them only, but by what you teach them and discipline them to do for themselves.

Founding Colorado's first school was not the only contribution of Professor Goldrick to the civilizing of the Far West. Denver in 1859 had a newspaper, several "hotels," a variety of business houses and was liberally supplied with brothels, saloons, and gambling hells, but it still had no church. So Goldrick pitched in with the Methodist missionaries, the Rev. Jacob Adriance and the Rev. George W. Fisher, to start the first Sunday school in November. The professor also was a founding member of A. E. Pierce's subscription library and was in demand as a public orator on patriotic or cultural topics. He went on from there to become a newspaperman.

Late in the fall the professor was installed as the *News'* first reporter. His maiden writings appear in the paper dated November 17, and for the next five years he was the principal ornament of the staff, dividing his time between journalism and teaching. He also contributed frontier correspondence to the St. Louis *Democrat* under the *nom de plume* of "Observer." Not all of the items he sent east pleased the home folks, and specifically one dispatch offended the first Denver postmaster, W. P. McClure, a Southern duelist with a sensitive honor, who admired being called the "Little Thunderer" when he was in his cups. Richardson supplies the details:

. . . The correspondent of the St. Louis *Democrat* excited the ire of one of Buchanan's shining appointees, the Denver postmaster. . . . One evening this functionary lured the journalist into the post-office; then closing the doors, with a cocked revolver at the head of the luckless scribe, he compelled him to write and sign a statement that he knew his published allegations to be false and slanderous when he made them.

Under that influence which knows no law, the correspondent made this voluntary retraction. But the people took the matter in hand and after a fierce struggle, the postmaster, who was a man of wealth, and sustained by all the leading desperadoes, as his only means of escape from the gibbet, succumbed to the city government, and gave bonds to keep the peace.⁸

⁸Richardson, op. cit., pp. 305-6.

Smiley says McClure armed and entrenched himself in the post office and defied the authorities who went to arrest him on a charge of assaulting Goldrick with intent to kill. But the postmaster was "prominent and influential in the community" and he "practically dictated terms for settling the matter."⁹ As will subsequently appear, the "Little Thunderer" met a fate at least proportionate to his arrogant affront to freedom of the press.

Goldrick was made city editor and finally associate editor of the *News* in 1864, but a year later he went to Salt Lake City to help edit the *Daily Union Vidette*, an experiment at genteel journalism in Brigham Young's stronghold. The Mormons, however, were less than receptive to such missionary work, and the *Vidette* folded in 1866, apparently with some bitter feelings. Byers wrote later that he understood that his former associate "was given a limited time to leave the territory." Returning to Colorado, the professor became co-editor with Henry Garbanati of the *Daily Colorado Times*, which made its bow December 1, 1866, in Black Hawk, one of the successor towns to Mountain City at the Gregory Diggings. The following April the *Times* moved a half mile up the cañon to Central City, where it expired in January 1868. Goldrick had withdrawn from the mountain daily in September 1867 and returned to Denver. On February 1, 1868, he established the second *Rocky Mountain Herald*, arbitrarily numbering it back to the founding of Thomas Gibson's *Herald* of 1860 although that paper had passed out of existence in 1864. The professor continued to edit his weekly *Herald* for the rest of his life, and for a short time in July and August of 1870 he attempted a daily edition. This proved too much, however, for a one-man operation, even when that man had the professor's flair for language. His *Herald* still is published regularly every Thursday in Denver, and it has become a unique sort of journal. Its interior is jammed with legal advertising and cuts of whalebone corsets or fire engines culled from ancient boiler-plate services. The front page is given over to the graceful and brilliant personal essays of Thomas Hornsby Ferril, the West's leading poet, some of which were gathered into the book *I Hate Thursday*. Tom's wife, Hellie, author of *The Indoor Bird-Watcher's Manual*, is editor of the *Herald*. She conducts a "Dumb Friend's League" with the aid of distinguished authors and industrialists as First, Second and Third Assistant Sea Serpent Editors and a noted educator as Limerick Editor. Regular correspondents of the modern *Herald* have included the late Bernard DeVoto, Robert Frost, and Carl Sandburg.

Although publishing a daily singlehanded taxed Goldrick's capacities, his production of longhand copy was prodigious even by comparison with the rapid work of typewriter-equipped rewrite men of the present day. A contemporary remembered him thus:

⁹Smiley, *History of Denver*, p. 348.

While on the News, Goldrick became sadly dissipated, seldom going to bed sober, or for that matter, seldom "hitting the hay" twice in the same room. He was known by everyone, and usually had no trouble in finding shelter any hour of the night. It became the regular thing in the office, when the city editor failed to show up by noon, for the boss to say "who will go and find Goldrick?" The News then was an evening paper, went to press at five o'clock, and Goldrick could output enough "copy" to fill his page in two or three hours, if he could be found in time.

Going to Chicago to secure material for the Herald, he met a middle-aged widow, a fine woman, and after a brief acquaintance, they were married, and now comes the surprising part of the story. From the time he met her until after her death, five or more years, Goldrick did not touch or taste liquor, and was one of the best behaved and best dressed men in Denver. It was one instance where a woman reformed a man by marrying him. As I remember it, he drank more or less after her death, and did not long survive her. . . .¹⁰

Denver's distinguished but dissipated professor died of pneumonia in a lonely rented room on November 25, 1882. Both in spite of and because of his handicap he left his mark on the city.

The town eventually got around to replacing his Sunday school with churches. The Methodists built one in the summer of 1860, and the Catholics completed theirs a few months later in time for a Christmas service conducted by the Rev. J. P. Machebeuf, the pioneer priest on whose life story Willa Cather drew for her *Death Comes for the Archbishop*. Professor Goldrick's Union School was the forerunner of the first public schools of 1862, though it was not until 1872 that Denver built its first schoolhouse, and the entire school system was suspended for a time in 1864 during the lean days of isolation brought about by the Civil War and Indian troubles on the plains. The war, however, was not permitted to impede planning for higher education. The News in May 1863 announced that proposals for a seminary were being considered. Among the twenty-six founding trustees, was, of course, editor Byers. Governor John Evans was elected president of the trustees, and Byers secretary and head of the building committee. Byers apparently handled his assignment with dispatch; for the News could report on September 10 that "the University building is being pushed forward rapidly and when finished will compare most favorably with any similar structure west of St. Louis." By Christmas a new bell was hung in the tower of the completed Colorado Seminary, now the University of Denver, at Fourteenth and Arapahoe streets across from the mansion of Governor Evans. The completion must have been a peculiar satisfaction for an editor who had received almost no formal schooling himself and was watching his town grow rapidly toward appointments and luxuries he had never

¹⁰Sopris, op. cit., pp. 6-7.

known. At thirty-two Byers, who had taught himself to read and write, was a founding father of a university.

But the task of city building was far from complete for Byers, and life in Denver fell a long way short of polish and grace, even allowing for the treble enthusiasms of seminarians. Three years later William Hepworth Dixon, an English cleric, paid the city a visit on his American grand tour. In his *New America*, Dixon is aghast at the murders, hangings, and gunplay. He found Denver a "wifeless town" and the men "swearing, fighting, drinking, like old Norse gods."

Denver is a city of four thousand people, with ten or twelve streets laid out; with two hotels, a bank, a theatre, half a dozen chapels, fifty gambling houses and a hundred grog-shops. As you wander about these hot and dirty streets you seem to be walking in a city of demons. Every fifth house appears to be a bar, a whisky-shop, a lager-beer saloon; every tenth house appears to be either a brothel or a gambling house; very often both in one. In these horrible dens a man's life is of no more worth than a dog's. . . .¹¹

Dixon's statistics may have been off—the very proper Jerome Smiley complained that the British visitor was a badly misguided observer as a consequence of falling in with the "wrong people"—but the over-all impression he conveys cannot have been too much exaggerated. The comforts and conveniences of life came slowly to Denver.

One of the first campaigns of the *News* was for so simple an asset as a bridge across Cherry Creek. Only a rickety footbridge spanned the stream, and wagon traffic was forced to wallow through a hundred yards of loose sand. "Cherry Creek needs a bridge," the *News* insisted on September 10, 1859, and "a few days work will build it." In a gross misestimate of the innocent-appearing rivulet which he may have remembered ruefully a few years later, Byers went on to advocate that a causeway of willows covered with stone and earth be laid down across the sandy bottoms and the few feet of meandering water. It was a successful campaign. Two months later, on November 17, the paper could report the bridge under construction, but it prodded the community onward in the realm of bridge building. "Why not the same at Blake and McGaw streets?"

Then there was the matter of mail service. In the beginning the nearest post office was at Fort Laramie, two hundred and twenty miles to the north, and the Pike's Peakers felt acutely their isolation in a wilderness not even the U.S. mails penetrated. Later, when the stage line started, there were loud complaints against the twenty-five-cents-a-letter charge for ferrying mail from the end of the federal postal lines in Leavenworth to the mouth of Cherry Creek. Moreover, some of the letters were

¹¹William Hepworth Dixon, *New America* (Philadelphia, 1867), pp. 92, 96, 97.

tampered with and opened while in the hands of the express agents. A clamor, to which the *News* added its trumpets, went up for a genuine post office.

Cherry Creek had a nominal post office beginning in May of 1859. To complicate matters, it was named Coraville, although there was no settlement by that name in the Pike's Peak country. The *News* on May 7 reported that Washington had established Coraville post office and installed Mathias Snyder of Virginia as postmaster. There is no record of the source of the name Coraville, although a local legend says postmaster Snyder named it for his wife. A contract for a daily post to and from Coraville was announced, but it was never carried out, and the post office lasted only about two months. On June 9 the *News* carried a story of the appointment of Henry Allen as postmaster of Auraria, and a canceling device was immediately fashioned for him from *News* back-shop types. Allen made a contract with a Mr. Willis to carry mails to and from the Missouri River. Again the contractor failed to deliver, leaving the Auraria post office as stranded as Coraville had been.

Mail had been coming through since May 7, however, as private express matter on stages of the Leavenworth & Pike's Peak Company, which added a charge of twenty-five cents for each letter and ten cents for each newspaper. The Cherry Creek pioneers, who earlier in the year had been happy to pay a dollar a letter for mail brought down from Fort Laramie, soon decided the stage company's charges were exorbitant, and indignant letters filled the *News*. Denver City finally got its own post office in February 1860, and the "Little Thunderer," as has been noted, used it as fort and private jail for the squaring of personal scores with newspapermen. Denver remained a stagecoach town until the coming of the railroads in 1870, and although the various express companies eventually received government contracts which reduced postage rates to normal levels, the service often was disrupted by bad weather, Indians, or bankruptcy of the stage lines.

When editorial tirades failed to produce results William Byers tried his hand at improving mail service from the inside. He stepped in as postmaster for the consolidated towns late in 1864 and held the office, in addition to his many other duties and activities, until 1866. Later, when he had retired from his editorial career with the *News*, he began a second term as postmaster in 1879 and put into effect the first free home delivery of mail with a force of six carriers.

Byers' concern with the early mails was not, of course, unalloyed civic altruism. As publisher of probably the most remote newspaper in America he had a big stake in postal frequency and regularity. There was no telegraph line west of Fort Kearney in Nebraska, and the *News* depended upon Eastern exchanges for latest word about one of the key political campaigns in American history and the ominous rumblings of

approaching war. Without Eastern papers to clip and copy, news coverage could not extend much beyond boar fights, chess clubs, and Sunday school sociables. The uncertainty of the mails forced the *News* into the very channels which make its old files an inexhaustible source of the important minutiae of local history, but the isolation rankled the news judgments of keen young men like Byers, Dailey, and Goldrick, who were acutely aware that they lived in exciting, newsworthy times.

Denver and its *News* also were wholly dependent on the long, exposed lines of plodding oxen which freighted supplies across the interminable plains. Rugged Murphy wagons, specially built in St. Louis for the prairie traffic, carried most of the essentials out to the new country. If, now and then, one of the wagons carried a piano or a box of books, the bulk of the cargo ran to the staples, the flour and the nails, needed by a town that was growing and building. Plains freighting reached enormous proportions in the boom days of 1859 and 1860. Trains of fifty wagons or more, one after another, came creaking up the Arkansas, the Platte, or the waterless Smoky Hill central route. The draft animals, between trips, grazed the prairie brown and bare in a huge circle around Denver. Slowly the nature of the things they brought assumed variety: window glass, steam boilers, tinned oysters, French champagnes and Havana cigars, lace parasols and New York frocks. The luxuries commanded almost any price sellers demanded, and they were beyond the means of most Pike's Peakers. For them, dress was plain and diet plainer. The average table was set with beans, bacon, and biscuits, wild game, tough beef slaughtered from worn-out oxen, a few home-grown vegetables in season, melons from the Arkansas Valley, and dried fruit. The *News* tried to be helpful with what today would be called kitchen hints. On September 3, 1859: "A small portion of sassafras bark mixed with dried fruit will keep it free from worms for years." On May 30, 1860, somewhat insistently: "Molasses made from the box elder trees on Clear Creek is fully equal to the product of the sugar maple."

Ox freight arrived slow and cost dear. Normally a train consisted of twenty-six wagons. Twenty-five of them carried three to four tons of cargo apiece; the twenty-sixth was loaded with camp equipment and in-transit supplies for the teamsters. Five or six yokes of oxen were assigned to each wagon. Such trains made the trip through from the Missouri in forty to sixty days, and it was no catch-as-catch-can business. Freighting lines were well-organized enterprises, trains departed on schedule, followed closely mapped routes, unloaded at specific terminal warehouses and, for a time, turned handsome profits for investors in the companies. One major line, Russell, Majors & Waddell, not only demanded strict obedience from its employees but also supervised their morals. Each man was required to swear a pledge: "While in the employ of Russell, Majors & Waddell, I agree not to use profane language, not

to get drunk, not to treat animals cruelly, and not to do anything incompatible with the conduct of a gentleman." The vow must have been a sore trial to the innocent souls of mule skinnners and bullwhackers.

Freight rates generally were six to ten cents a pound, although they sometimes soared to twenty, twenty-five, and forty cents. Moreover, the trains didn't always get through on schedule in times of bad roads, storms, or Indian wars, and the *News*, which depended upon them for supplies of newsprint, often was caught short. Some issues of the paper had to appear as half sheets, or smaller. An edition on brown wrapping paper already has been mentioned, and the *News* also used tissue paper and writing paper. Contemporary sources tell of issues on wallpaper, but none of these are known to have survived. Byers recalled one paper emergency during the Indian wars when he was forced to bring in newsprint by stagecoach express at a charge of a dollar a pound. Small wonder, then, that the *News* was beating the drum early for the transcontinental railroad and urging that it be routed through Colorado. A rail line up the Platte "would pay better than two-thirds of the roads in the States," the paper declared on November 24, 1859, and suddenly the rugged peaks, whose precipitous grandeurs the *News* on all other occasions extolled, flattened out and became no barrier at all to railroad construction. The paper hovered paternally over the several visits of old Jim Bridger as guide to survey crews seeking a slot in the mountains through which rails could be laid, but this was a campaign that failed. The railroad took the easy grade through Wyoming, and Denver and the *News* remained dependent on mule coaches and ox wagons.

The paper also was viewing with great interest any other means of transportation that presented itself.

Camels, for example. The *News* was hot on the story May 30, 1860, when word came from San Francisco that thirty dromedaries would arrive about midsummer to be used instead of oxen or mules for mountain express and freight commerce between California and Denver. The camels never reached the Rockies, though they did get a tryout in the desert Southwest.

Or boats. And here was another *News* campaign that failed. Nature refused to co-operate with Byers' determination to convert the Platte into a navigable stream and Denver into a river port. He began the campaign by starting to print "Shipping News," surely one of the most cheerful anomalies in American journalism. On September 10, 1859:

BOAT DEPARTURES. On Wednesday afternoon Scows "Ute" and "Cheyenne" for mouth of Platte. Scow "Arapahoe" for New Orleans. All laden with passengers and freight.

On September 17:

BOAT DEPARTURE. Sailed, on the 14th, clipper "Pittsburg," Capt. J. Steiner, for Pittsburg, Pa.; eight passengers and their baggage. At St. Louis, boat and passengers will take steamer for final destination. Capt. Steiner thinks he will put a steamer on the Platte the coming season. Success attend him.

On October 6:

Boat "Empire State" sailed on Tuesday last for St. Joseph, Mo., with G. H. Washburn and N. C. Bartholomew as passengers, and their baggage, bound for Tompkins county, N. Y.

A month later, on November 3, Byers was still hammering away—and the Platte hadn't deepened by an inch. He reprinted, almost plaintively, an item from the St. Joseph *Journal* about the *Colona*, a "little Platte river steamer" which had arrived at the levee there. "She is the most complete little steamboat that has yet visited our wharf," the *Journal* said. "She is 100 feet long, about 25 feet wide, has one boiler, two engines and two shells and draws but 18 inches light. . . ." Out on the upper reaches of the South Platte, where shoal water is likely to be closer to eight than eighteen inches and the banks often have less than twenty-five feet between them, editor Byers insisted:

Should the spring and summer of 1860 prove as favorable for navigation on the Platte as has been the past, we shall expect to see, not only the "*Colona*," but half a dozen other steamboats as high up the Platte as this city. We have frequently traveled on steamers that could navigate the Platte, clear to the mountains, with ease.

No steamboat ever whistled for a landing at the Denver docks. Byers at last bowed to hydrology and shifted his promotional energies elsewhere.

On April 18, 1860, it already has been noted, the *News* told how three men had arrived from the States in a "combined wind wagon and hand car," a light wagon fitted out with sails to catch prairie breezes. There is no indication, however, that the *News* thought the device had practical large-scale application.

Byers was more convinced by the new overland steam machines, and urged on February 27, 1860, that they be employed to help bring out the seasonal emigration during the approaching spring. One of these already has been touched upon. A veritable behemoth among motorcars, it was built in eastern Nebraska by J. R. Brown at a cost of twelve thousand dollars. It had drive wheels ten feet tall with rims two feet wide, and it weighed twelve tons, about one fifth the weight of the locomotive of the day. Plans called for the "Prairie Motor" to haul a string of wagons behind it. It set out in July of 1862, made nine miles, and broke a vital crank. Brown died, Congress voted the Pacific Railroad, and the "Prairie

Motor" gathered dust on the Morton ranch. Its boiler eventually was put to use in the gas works at Nebraska City.¹²

Another hope exploded. Back to the mules and oxen—and attendant high cost of living. The *News* for August 20, 1859, listed the following current prices: flour from the States \$14 to \$15 per 100 pounds, Mexican flour \$10 to \$14, corn meal \$12 per 100, bacon 30 cents a pound, sugar 25 cents, coffee 25 cents, salt 15 cents, beans 15 cents, onions 25 cents, potatoes 25 cents, rice 20 cents, butter 75 cents, cheese 35 to 50 cents, lard 50 cents, crackers 30 cents, bread 15 cents, fresh beef 10 cents, venison \$1.00 per quarter, milk 10 to 15 cents a quart, molasses \$3.00 a gallon, whiskey \$3.00 a gallon, lumber \$70 per 1000 feet, nails \$20 per 100 pounds, window glass \$10 to \$12 a box. All these in the 1859 dollar, which commanded a value roughly three times that of the 1958 dollar. By autumn of 1859 flour was up to \$40 a barrel, beans had gone to 75 cents a quart, coffee to 90 cents a pound, and eggs to \$2.00 a dozen.

Somehow Denver settlers paid the prices or tightened their belts another notch and roughed it through. Or went home. Both in 1859 and 1860 countermigration in the fall and winter months carried the bulk of Colorado's highly mobile population back to the States. The general superintendent of the Hannibal & St. Joseph Railroad estimated that his line alone carried fifteen thousand Pike's Peakers on the first leg of their journeys west in 1859 and 1860, but on December 21, 1859, the *News* reported homeward-bound miners tumbling out of the hills at a rate of fifty to a hundred a day. The population of Denver dropped to not more than three thousand during the cold and cheerless winter of '59-'60. Only 690 men turned out to cast votes in the first city election, but the *News* said this was "not more than one-third of those in the corporate limits." Some heart could be taken, however, in the announcement Russell, Majors & Waddell gave to the New York *Tribune* that they were expecting to transport eighty thousand emigrants to Pike's Peak next season. The *News* on January 11 forecast the new rush for March but held its estimate of prospective arrivals to between ten and thirty thousand. It cautioned those planning to move west to "come prepared and not until April or May," and it warned: "So sure as there is such a rush, at such a season as was the last, we will again see a backward rush, and the old cry of 'humbug' will again ring in our ears." Still, it was "Ho for Pike's Peak!" in the *News* of January 25, and "the exodus from the States the coming spring will exceed anything of the kind ever before known in the world's history." By February 15 the new rush already had started, and the paper again cautioned the eager pilgrims to wait for better weather later. "We can only urge, as before, upon our readers in the States, to delay their departure until the season is more advanced; then come with a determination to remain and *work*, and they

¹²*Colorado Magazine*, Colorado State Historical Society, Denver, Vol. VIII, No. 1 (Jan. 1931), pp. 4 et seq.

will be abundantly repaid for their industry." Thomas W. Knox, who visited Denver later in 1860, estimated that there were seventy thousand arrivals in that year and placed Denver at 5000 inhabitants.¹³ But the first territorial census of June 1861 found only 25,329 persons—not counting Indians—in the whole territory and 3500 in Denver. The census broke down to 18,136 males over twenty-one, 2622 males under twenty-one, 4484 females, all ages, and 89 Negroes. The *News* pronounced the census "incomplete" on July 17, 1861, and said there were a lot of people scattered around in the hills that the census takers hadn't caught up with. Nevertheless, nine years later the federal census of 1870 was unable to do much better and could locate only 4759 residents in Denver. The city's major growth would not begin until the railroads arrived.

If the Denver of 1859-60 was neither so large nor so grand as the *News* would have liked to make it appear, the town still was building at what seemed to be a furious pace. By December 28, 1859, the paper reported there was a great shortage of nails and glass, even at the fancy prices, and "paints are getting to be generally used." Many people went back east for the winters, some returned to their former homes so they could vote in the 1860 election, and patriots of both North and South marched across the plains to take up arms in the rebellion. During the Civil War years the nation almost forgot about the little city which had been hailed as the newest child of manifest destiny. But through the time when the nation's attention was diverted to its own survival Denver managed to eke out a slow and painful progress.

E. B. Sutherland opened the first drugstore; "a desideratum long wanted in this country," applauded the *News* on October 13, 1859. "Noisy Tom" Pollock, village blacksmith-hangman-marshal, found coal out near the foothills and began mining it for sale at a dollar a bushel. Down near Cañon City an "oil spring" was discovered and developed as the nation's second producing oil field. In its issue of February 26, 1863, the *News* acknowledged receipt of a sample of the oil. "It burns with a beautiful clear red flame and we inaugurate its use in Denver in writing this notice by its light." Arrival of another fluid, even earlier, also did much to cheer the office of the *News*. In November of 1859 Messrs. Solomon and Tascher opened their Rocky Mountain Brewery in Auraria, and the *News* on November 24 gave as its considered opinion that "this teutonic beverage will materially decrease the present consumption of strychnine whisky and Taos lightning."

Photographers were busy in and around Denver from the start, although far too few of their plates have survived. John Dailey's diary for September 20, 1859, records that a "picture taker [was] around taking a view of the office." The man under the black hood probably was James M. Burdick, Leavenworth ambrotypist, who was shooting scenes of the

¹³*The Knickerbocker or New-York Monthly Magazine*, Vol. LVIII, No. 2 (Aug. 1861), pp. 126, 128.

new country for exhibit in the States during the winter, according to the September 22 *News*. The first resident photographer was George Wakely—"a talented artist from Chicago," the *News* said October 20, 1859—who opened an ambrotype gallery on Larimer Street opposite Apollo Hall, where his wife and three daughters were performers.

Over on the west side of the Platte, still another town, Highland, was laid out in the late summer of 1859 on the bluffs overlooking the river. Secretary of the town company—William N. Byers. He published in the October 13 *News* a notice of a fifteen-dollar assessment on stockholders. There was horse racing as early as 1858 and a short-lived Jockey Club in 1861.¹⁴ For pioneers with more conservative ideas about where their money should go, there were banks. In June 1860, George W. and Samuel Brown opened the first, and later the same month Turner & Hobbs started the second.¹⁵ Neither survived. In the *News* of November 29, 1862, a notice appeared that Luther Kountze, a friend of Byers' in his Nebraska days, had arrived in town to open a branch of the Omaha banking firm of Kountze & Brothers. The Kountze bank on August 1, 1866, became the Colorado National Bank, still in business on "Scratch Lane" in Denver today.

Another bank and a mercantile firm, both pioneers of the sixties, also have lived to help Denver observe its centennial. The First National Bank had its beginnings on July 20, 1860, as Clark, Gruber & Company, bankers and minters of Pike's Peak gold into coins. Editor Byers of the *News* was invited to be present for the striking off of the first gold pieces.

. . . In compliance with which invitation, we forthwith repaired to the elegant banking house of the above firm on the corner of McGaa [Market] and G [Sixteenth] streets, and were admitted to their coining room in the basement, where we found preparations almost complete for the issue of Pike's Peak coin. At four o'clock the machinery was put in motion, and "mint drops" of the value of \$10 each began dropping into a tin pail with a most musical "chink." About a thousand dollars were turned out, at the rate of fifteen or twenty coins a minute, which was deemed satisfactory for the first experiment. . . .

On the face [of the coins] is a representation of the Peak, its base surrounded by a forest of timber, and "Pike's Peak Gold" encircled the summit. Immediately under its face is the word "Denver" and beneath it "Ten D." On the reverse is the American Eagle, encircled by the name of the firm, "Clark, Gruber & Co.," and beneath it the date 1860.¹⁶

¹⁴Byers, Bancroft ms. L8 op. cit.

¹⁵Alonzo E. Ellsworth, "Early Denver Business," *The Denver Westerners' Brand Book*: 1950 (Denver, 1951), p. 253.

¹⁶*Rocky Mountain News*, July 25, 1860.

The Clark, Gruber ten-dollar piece actually was some seventeen grains richer in gold than the federal coin of the same denomination. Later the private mint turned out twenty-, five-, and two-and-a-half-dollar coins, all now highly prized by numismatists. The Clark, Gruber mint was taken over in April 1863 by the federal government and became the Denver branch of the United States Mint, which today turns out nearly seventy-five per cent of the nation's coinage. The banking part of the firm continued as Clark & Company, which on May 10, 1865, evolved into the First National Bank of Denver, now resident of the city's newest and tallest building at Seventeenth and Welton streets. Two of Byers' personal friends were closely identified with the First National over the years: Dr. John Evans, second territorial governor, and David H. Moffat, Jr., who was present in 1858 when Byers received a load of buckshot in the shoulder for his pains as peacemaker in Omaha's shanty town.

The mercantile pioneer dates to October 6, 1864, when W. B. Daniels of Leavenworth walked into town beside an ox wagon loaded with dry goods and notions. It ended its independent life last year (1958) when it merged with the May Company, national department store chain which had its origins in a tent in early-day Leadville, Colorado. In the interval the Daniels & Fisher Stores Company was Denver's leading department store and gave the city its most striking landmark—a 330-foot replica, once cream-colored but now dingy with soot, of the sixteenth-century Campanile of St. Mark's in Venice. The famous Venetian bell tower has been remodeled considerably in restoration efforts of recent years, and travelers say the Denver building now remains a more faithful model of the original than the present remodeled Campanile itself. The tower at Sixteenth and Arapahoe streets was built in 1910-12, and for nearly half a century it dominated the relatively squat Denver sky line. It has now been topped by the 28-story, 365-foot First National Bank building. (The Statue of Liberty stands 152 feet, the Washington Monument 555, and the Empire State building 1250.) The store was "D&F's" to three generations of Denver residents, and its tower marked the hours with bell and clock, flashed news of the election of Taft, mounted Denver's first airport beacon, tempted numerous suicides from its observation deck, and wafted Christmas music over the downtown district. A *Rocky Mountain News* reporter of the 1890s, Charles MacAllister Willcox, was president of D&F's for thirty years until his retirement in 1929. When he became a merchant prince Willcox loved to tell the story of how, as a *News* police reporter, he invented the civic crisis of a woman who had swallowed a fistful of dynamite caps and was wandering about the city subject to explosion at the slightest jar. "Dynamite Dolly" had the town edgy for more than a week.

When Daniels & Fisher's was merged last year with the May Company

deference was paid to honorable antiquity by giving the store which has become the center of the new Courthouse Square development the hyphenated name of "May-D&F." The May Company itself is a Colorado mercantile pioneer. David May, one of the thousands who came west seeking health, founded the firm in September 1877 in a tentlike shack in boomtown Leadville with a stock heavy on long red woolen underwear and miners' overalls.¹⁷ The May Company moved to Denver in 1880 and since has grown into a nationwide operation with thirty-five stores in eight major cities from Baltimore to Los Angeles. The vacated D&F campanile has been renamed the Allen Tower and is being converted into a merchandise mart for wholesalers and brokers.

In the year of D&F's founding Denver was still wild enough that an antelope could be shot on Larimer Street well within the corporation limits. But the wilderness was giving way. The *News* found it necessary to editorialize at an early date on the subjects "Don't Kill the Birds" and "Save the Trees." Denver soon became far too citified for Jim Beckwourth, the mulatto mountain man and honorary chief of the Crows. Jim stopped by for the winter of 1859-60 and told the *News* he felt like prosecuting the settlers for "building cities on his old hunting grounds."¹⁸ Byers was responsive to the protest, even though he was conductor of the chorus which called for a bigger and better town, more and more settlers and miners. He, too, had known the West when it was unspoiled and lonely, and there was much of the nature lover in him. Pleas for songbirds and against wanton destruction of forests were in character. Between the pages of his pocket diaries he often pressed mountain wild flowers, and they can be found there today, fragile, brown, and telling of the man.

Byers had his farm a few miles up the Platte. He planted fruit trees and grapevines there, the first to be brought into the country. Byers organized the Colorado State Forestry Association, and around the "Kenneth Square" mansion he later built at 171 South Washington Street, he planted thirty-five species of trees not native to Colorado. Some of them survive and are used by nature-study classes of Byers Junior High School, which now occupies the site. The young editor was a founder of Colorado's first agriculture society and served as its secretary.¹⁹ His *News* consistently lent its support to every movement for agricultural development by crop diversification, irrigation, experimental work, or the training of young farmers and foresters in the agricultural college to be established at Fort Collins. Alvin T. Steinel, the historian of Colorado agriculture, credits an editorial in the *News*

¹⁷Ida Libert Uchill, *Pioneers, Peddlers and Tsadikim* (Denver, 1957), pp. 98-99.

¹⁸*Rocky Mountain News*, Dec. 1, 1859.

¹⁹*Ibid.*, Apr. 2, 1860.

for November 3, 1866, with setting in motion the idea of raising sugar beets, now one of the state's major cash crops, on the desert.²⁰ Byers also was in on the beginning of wheat farming in Colorado. The *News* of October 27, 1859, told of what happened to a single grain accidentally seeded in the corn plot of a Denver garden:

Mr. McClure has shown us one hundred and forty-eight grains of wheat, the yield of two heads, grown in the gardens of the Messrs. Parkison, in Denver City. The grains are very large, fully one-third larger than the best we ever saw in the eastern states, and fully equal in size and weight to the famous wheat of California and Oregon. We have not a doubt that millions of acres of our plains and mountain valleys will produce wheat that for quantity and quality, the world cannot excel.

The questing eye of the busy editor watched field and garden as well as mountain and mine. Up in the hills the miners were running into difficulties. Placer mining passed its peak by 1860. The gold seekers turned to tunnel and drift mining, which was slower and required a heavier investment in machinery for refining and milling the ores. Moreover, the ores themselves were beginning to prove refractory in yielding up their treasure. Assays proved the gold was there, but the refining methods then in use were not recovering it in full measure. During the years 1858-70 the Colorado mines produced more than thirty-three million dollars in gold, but production dropped in the following decade to twenty-eight million. Finally smelting methods were developed for the complex Colorado ores, which usually contained silver, copper, lead, and zinc in addition to gold. Gold production then climbed steadily to hit its high mark of two hundred and thirty-five million in the first decade of the twentieth century.

Meantime, however, a new bonanza was hit. The white metal, silver, had been principally an annoyance to the gold miners because it complicated refining. Now it was being sought for its own sake. The *News* reported the first major silver discovery, the Belmont Lode, in September 1864. Within a few years silver produced the new towns of Georgetown, Silver Plume (where the first power rock drill was developed in 1869), Creede, Aspen, Leadville, and Caribou (producer of the silver bricks over which President Grant walked to the Teller House in Central City on his 1880 visit). For thirty years Colorado silver was more lucrative than Colorado gold. It created many of the rich-overnight mining kings. Silver, probably more than any other single factor, finally brought wealth to Denver, glistening carriages to her tree-lined avenues, and many-

²⁰Alvin T. Steinel, *History of Agriculture in Colorado* (Fort Collins, 1926) pp. 281-84, 288, 292.

gabled mansions to Brown's Bluff overlooking what had been a sordid, dusty frontier village.

But the reign of the silver kings was still in the future when Byers sang out in the *News* of June 27, 1864, to herald another rung gained in the climb up the ladder of municipal advancement:

A shoe blacking shop was started here on Saturday. The city is finished and the country is safe!

CHAPTER SEVEN

The Editor Is Kidnaped

IT WAS still a rough country: new, brash, ungentled. Perils of man and nature lay in wait, and a high-pitched note of primal violence carries through accounts of the early years like the sound of a file grating on saw teeth.

A man's body had been found on the west side of South Park, the *News* said. His left leg was "broken below the knee, by a pistol shot, evidently his own, as a pistol lay by his side with one barrel bursted. The broken leg had been bound up and put in a box, which had been taken off, and he had commenced cutting off the leg with a razor, which still remained in the wound. . . ."¹

Some of the names on the land are eloquent. Dead Men's Gulch and Skull Creek. Troublesome. Stringtown. Greenhorn. Cripple, Disappointment, and Mad creeks. Gouge Eye Gulch. River of the Lost Souls. Cannibal Plateau and Last Chance.²

In Denver there was a breed of men to whom knives in the dark represented a proper answer to insults. John Rooker arrived in '58. He built one of the first houses in Auraria, and his mother was one of the town's first white women. Jack O'Neill came a little later. Byers says he was a sporting man and came from Utah with a woman named Salt Lake Kate. Probably O'Neill was Kate's fancy man, since Jerome Smiley concedes he was "somewhat notorious" and "very conspicuous." Difficulties arose between Rooker and O'Neill, and Jack proposed they settle them with bowie knives, locked together in a dark room, only the winner to come out. Rooker declined. O'Neill denounced him for a coward, appending comments on his parentage and the virtue of his mother and sister. So Rooker went home, got his rifle, and shot O'Neill dead in the streets of Auraria on March 30, 1860. In his account of the affair Byers adds that "no notice was taken of the murder." Killings, too, were at times "unexceptionable."

Knives, rifles, pistols, and also scalp dances. Fresh scalps, they were, and proudly shown with war paint and whooping in the streets at the doorstep of the *News*. In May of 1860 an Arapaho war party returned to

¹*Rocky Mountain News*, Sept. 29, 1859.

²See J. Frank Dawson, *Place Names in Colorado* (Denver, 1954).

Denver with four Ute scalps and fifty horses. The warriors staged a big victory scalp dance in the western hills, now North Denver, where a thousand of the tribesmen under Chief Little Raven were camped. Several times the Indians proudly brought their trophies down into the principal streets of the settlement and danced before hundreds of curious spectators.

A month later, however, there was a turn in the tide of the savage wars. On June 10 a large number of Arapahoes, some Sioux, and other Plains Indians (Byers says there were Apaches present, but it seems scarcely likely) assembled at Denver and again organized an expedition against the mountain-dwelling Utes. Jim Beckwourth and Kit Carson, in town as agent for the Utes, sought to dissuade them, but the braves set out anyway. They found a Ute village in South Park, the beautiful Bayou Salade of the fur traders, and attacked it. But the Utes followed up with a counterattack, disastrously defeated the invaders from the prairies, and sent them retreating back to Denver. The crestfallen war party returned with five dead and thirty-two wounded. A few days later another party made a foray into the mountains, found Utes, and stampeded back to camp on Blake Street in the heart of town. There were Utes behind every rock and bush, they said. Great numbers of them, and carrying the war pipe. Denver had the jitters for a week.

As late as 1873 and 1874, Denver was still being treated to scalp dancing, and on these occasions it was the Utes who wanted to show off *coups* to the white man. A special Ute agency had been established in Denver in 1871 with James B. Thompson as agent. Thompson was well liked by his charges, but he stoutly disapproved of their plans for a scalp dance on July 12, 1873, through the now much more metropolitan Denver streets. The Utes went ahead with their plans anyway. It didn't rate as much of a celebration; there was just one lone scalp to be hymned. It had been lifted two days earlier from an Arapaho in a clash on the Denver outskirts which was really more a gang fight than a battle. But by this time wild Indians were beginning to be a civic attraction. They could be shown off profitably to Eastern visitors. U. M. Curtis, agency interpreter, seized upon the incident to line his pockets. He put up a big circus tent and planned to charge admission to see the "scalp dance." Piaah's band of Utes was persuaded to stalk the streets daily for a week in war attire to advertise the show, and a brass band was added as a touch of promotional genius. Thompson met the first parade in the street in front of his office and broke it up in a sulphurous exchange of profanity with Curtis. The *News* spent two and a quarter columns telling about it on July 16 under the headline, "The Ute Circus; Thompson Checkmates Curtis' Indian Menagerie," and Thompson fired off a report to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs bragging that he had acted "firmly and fearlessly" in putting down "what I think would have been for this enlightened age and community a disgusting spectacle, and what

I feared most of all, might have fostered enmity between the tribes: resulted in serious disturbances in our streets and increased the chances of visits to our settlements from war parties of Plains Indians.”³

In the summer of the following year, however, about two hundred Utes were back in Denver with three fresh scalps which they said they had taken on a raid against Sioux and Cheyennes out on the plains. Plans were announced for several nights of celebration, spectators welcome, no charge. More than a thousand persons journeyed out to Sloan’s Lake, now a municipal sailboating center, to see the show. Among the ladies present were Mrs. William N. Byers and her sister, wife of W. R. Thomas, then associate editor of the *News*. Chauncey Thomas wrote later of what his mother told him:

. . . She says they [the Utes] had a rope circle, perhaps seventy-five to one hundred feet in diameter, the Indians standing outside of it, each holding the rope with both hands, waving it up and down, hopping up and down themselves, grunting, and sometimes yelling, but not circling; perhaps two hundred of them, both male and female, but no children holding the rope.

Inside this rope circle were three very old squaws, dirty, repulsive old hags, each holding aloft a long pole, and on the tip of each pole was a fresh scalp, stretched to about the size of a dinner plate, and these old women were crow-hopping in characteristic fashion around inside the rope circle, chanting gutterally [sic]. . . .⁴

Next day, the Utes becoming more and more frantic, the mayor stepped in and ended the ceremony.

Although their wives had been in the gaping audience the editors of the *News* voiced disapproval. On July 15 the paper said:

The Utes, with the pious Piah at their head, held a scalp dance, last evening, near Sloan’s Lake, over three bloody Cheyenne topknots, which dangled from three poles. The barbarous scene was witnessed by a crowd of at least five hundred people, many of them ladies. The dance opened at 5 o’clock and was kept up until far into the night.

The following day the *News* continued:

The Utes resumed their hilarious scalp dance at early candle light last evening. Rolling carriages raised a dust between the city and the camp from five to ten o’clock. The crowd was large and heterogeneous—which is a big word. It was disgusting to notice, among the spectators, lots of ladies, prominent in church and society circles, straining for a

³James W. Covington, “Ute Scalp Dance in Denver,” *Colorado Magazine*, Vol. XXX, No. 2 (Apr. 1953), pp. 119–24.

⁴Chauncey Thomas, “Last Scalp Dance in Denver,” ms., 1936, Colorado State Historical Society.

sight of the reeking scalps, which they scanned as eagerly as if they had been new bonnets. Next Sunday these ladies will be railing at THE NEWS for disseminating reading matter that is calculated to vitiate the public taste.

Throughout the early years, and particularly in 1859 and 1860, Indian lodges were a familiar sight on the fringes of the town. The bottoms had been a favored stopping place for a long time, and the Arapahoes and Utes, at least to this point, saw no reason to avoid them now that they contained a paleface settlement. In fact there was a special appeal about this civilization being thrust upon them. It came in bottles. Both the *News* and some of the Indians early recognized a peril. The paper was less than two months old on June 18 when it sounded out a

CAUTION. On Wednesday night last, two individuals, who are well known, busied themselves by furnishing whisky to some of the Indians camped in town. We give them notice that there is a Vigilance Committee of long standing, still in existence here, which is pledged to lynch any man found engaged in giving or selling liquor to the Indians, and thus endangering the safety of the settlers. Once more, gents, and you will see the operation of the people's prohibitory law.

Richardson remembered that the Arapahoes visiting Denver were ordinarily peaceful but could be dangerous when drunk. "One evening," he writes, "I saw a brawny brave, with a club thwack two of his drunken brethren upon their heads, so lustily that the blows were heard a quarter of a mile away. Then musing for some minutes, he solemnly ejaculated: 'Whisky—bad! Make Indian bad.' After which bit of wisdom he walked thoughtfully away. In ten minutes however, he returned with a bottle and a silver dollar and begged me to buy whisky for *him*. Like Hosea Bigelow he was 'in favor of the Maine Law, but agin' its enforcement.'"⁵

The pages of the *News* through the first years fail to record, however, a single instance in which the Indian, drunken or not, lived up to his dangerous reputation around town. Denver, although it titillated itself with numerous scares, never suffered an Indian attack, exposed as it was in its youth. In town the red man might put on fascinatingly barbaric ceremonials such as scalp dances, and he could be a nuisance with his drinking, begging, and thieving, but he quite evidently comported himself better than some of the whites. And he did not escape their tender mercies. The *News* for April 18, 1860, carried an indignant letter from Jim Beckwourth:

Editor *News*.—Justice to the Indian—an article they seldom obtain—and security to my fellow citizens, compel me to seek your columns to redress one of the grossest outrages ever perpetrated in this, or any

⁵Richardson, op. cit., p. 189.

other country; and I am charitable enough to believe that a majority of the whites would assist in punishing severely the perpetrators were they known.

On Saturday last [April 14] a band of Cheyenne and Apache Indians visited our city, in compliance with a promise made to me in January last. . . .

On their arrival they called upon me in a body, requesting me to show them a camping place—I done so. After dark a lot of *drunken devils* and “bummers” went to the lodges, took the Indian women and girls forcibly out, committing acts of violence, which in any other country would condemn the perpetrators to ignominy and shame; age was not respected—the gray hairs of John Poisel’s old Indian wife could not protect her; she was taken from her husband’s side in bed; but before they succeeded in their hellish work, crippled as he is, [he] compelled them, by threats with his pistol, to release her. The same night three mules were stolen from the Indians, taken off some ten miles and fettered; but the thieves could not *steal the trail*; the red man found his mules, and on Sunday morning came to me with their complaints. . . .

They left here on Sunday morning to deliberate in council, as to the course they ought to pursue. I asked them to make no definite conclusion until I had a talk with the whites, when I am to meet them in council and report, if the white men of Denver tolerate such inhuman and ungrateful conduct.

The Indians are as keenly sensible to acts of injustice, as they are tenacious of revenge, and it is more humiliating to them to be the recipients of such treatment *upon their own lands*, which they have been deprived of, their game driven off and they made to suffer by hunger, and when they pay us a visit, abused more than dogs. My advice is, that municipal regulations be made, preventing the sale of intoxicating drinks to them, with such penalties as would make the law respected. And all emigrants who are on their way here, ought to, most religiously, refrain from giving Indians whisky, or trading it to them for their horses, for if he sells his pony, he will steal one from the next white man that comes along. All our Indian troubles are produced by the imprudent acts of unprincipled white men. . . .

Jim was in a position to give advice. He had lived with the Indians for more than forty years, was an adopted brother of the Crows, and as their honorary war chief had led them in battles with the Blackfeet.

In the same issue the *News* took up the cry with an editorial entitled “Lo the Poor Indian” (using the phrase, for once, without ironical inflection):

We earnestly invite the attention of our citizens to the communication, to be found in our columns, from Capt. Beckwourth, in reference to the outrage committed upon the Indians lately encamped in our city for the purpose of peaceful trade. . . .

We hope the suggestions contained in the Capt.'s letter will be heeded. . . . Cannot some public expression of our municipal authorities or of the people be had, condemning the outrage, so that Capt. Beckwourth may bear to them such redress as it is in our power to make? . . .

A public meeting was called for Apollo Hall on April 20, and, Yankee fashion, it selected a five-man investigation committee. The committee left the matter in the hands of Beckwourth, who reported to a second meeting on April 27 that he had been able to identify only one of the rapists, Phil Gardner. This was probably the ne'er-do-well known generally, without explanation, as "Big Phil the Cannibal." Gardner once had brought the mail in from Fort Laramie at a dollar a letter before stage service started. Otherwise there seems to be no record that he was distinguished for civic benefactions. Smiley characterizes him as "a low character and loafer" and dismisses him as "of no particular value." Phil departed Denver abruptly a little after the Indian outrage, dodging two pot shots from a drunken friend.

No action was taken against Gardner, but the second indignation meeting drew up two resolutions. It was unanimously resolved "that we condemn the outrages lately perpetrated upon our Indian brethren, and pledge ourselves to bring to punishment the guilty parties if any further insults are offered them of that character" and "that the citizens of Denver entertain the Indian hospitably upon their visits to our city for purpose of trade." The *News* published the resolutions and a report of the meeting and, like the rest of Denver, promptly forgot about the whole affair.

Jim Beckwourth lived in and around Denver for about seven years, beginning in 1859, and he and Byers became well acquainted. The young editor, when he met the celebrated mountain man, had expected a "rough, illiterate back-woodsman" but found him "a polished gentleman, possessing a fund of general information which few can boast."⁶ During 1859-60, Beckwourth was employed as a storekeeper by A. P. Vasquez, nephew of Louis Vasquez, an old friend of the fur trails. Later Jim took up a ranch on the South Platte, south of the Byers place. There he built a cabin which became headquarters for visiting Indian friends and the few aging mountain men who still passed by. Byers' attorney, Lewis B. France, defended Beckwourth when he killed William ("Nigger Bill") Payne in 1864 for attempting to steal a ring from the finger of Mrs. Beckwourth, always referred to by the old trapper as "my wife, Lady Beckwourth."⁷

⁶*Rocky Mountain News*, Dec. 1, 1859.

⁷For a full account of Beckwourth's Denver years see Nolie Mumey, *James Pierson Beckwourth: An Enigmatic Figure of the West* (Denver, 1957).

As a neighbor, Beckwourth paid frequent calls on the Byers family, and the first of these caused some flutters for Elizabeth Byers. Jim was a mulatto, and dark. Mrs. Byers came from Iowa but there was Virginia in her background, she insisted.

Elizabeth M. Byers was the spunky duchess type, and the personality revealed by her surviving letters and papers is not an attractive one at this distance. She had to have a proper carriage when she paraded to the fair and threw a pet when the one the livery sent was not up to her station. She flounced around a great deal. The low quality and bad habits of maids and cooks gave her much trouble, and none of them stayed long in the Byers household. When her daughter Mollie lost a baby Mrs. Byers sought to cheer her by lugubrious warnings that she would "go insane of morbid grief" if she didn't straighten up. Then, for years, she would remind Mollie in letters of how sweet the child had been and how, just that day, she had been to the cemetery to strew flowers on "the dear little grave." Mrs. Byers enjoyed a poor health which required protracted journeys back home to Iowa, and later to Cape Cod, Pasadena, or Florida. She outlived her husband by nearly twenty years. Like many another Victorian wife with a busy and prominent husband, Elizabeth Byers flung herself, clucking, into good works and affairs of her church, but always self-consciously and always with a careful appraisal of honors and prerogatives due. As she grew older her role as a Denver pioneer noticeably enlarged, a circumstance not rare among first settlers. She began to describe herself as the eighth white woman in town, a calculation which was off by several score petticoats. But by her own standards, and perhaps by the standards of her day, Elizabeth Byers was a good woman. She founded and endowed the Byers Home for Boys, gave liberally to the Methodist Church, and always attended funerals punctually. She had a far better business head than her often financially embarrassed husband, and she stood by him through a scandal that would have sent most wives packing off home to mother permanently.

Elizabeth gushed a lot about her "nice silver" and "nappery" and how she "never lived a pioneer life without having artistic things about me," and she left this record of how it was when a mulatto mountain man in fringed buckskins came to call:

. . . But when our guests arrived and I found that one of them, Jim Beckwith, was a colored man, my aristocratic Virginia blood rather boiled, because I hadn't been used to sitting at a table with a colored man, and I hardly knew what to do, but almost instantly decided that there was but one thing to do and that was to ignore it altogether and treat them all alike, which I did.⁸

⁸Typescript, Byers papers, Western History Collection, Denver Public Library.

Elizabeth Byers survived her social crisis as Denver survived its mistreatment of Jim Beckwourth's friends the Indians. The Arapahoes and Utes drifted back to be cheated again by Denver traders and primed again with rotgut whiskey. They pilfered the clotheslines of unwary housewives and appeared suddenly, and frighteningly, at back doors to demand biscuits and sugar. The years when, finally, they would kill and plunder were still ahead.

Nor were the Indians the only ones who indulged in petty thievery. It became a popular art, and the *News*, struggling along on short rations, was among the victims. During the fall of 1859 the two Cherry Creek villages experienced a crime wave. Cattle were stolen and butchered. Someone tapped the till at Reed's saloon for six hundred dollars in gold and silver. Two yokes of oxen and a wagon were stolen in Boulder City, brought to Denver, posted as gambling collateral, and lost. The *News* gave warning on September 17 that "the light fingered gentry had better look out, or some of them will be suddenly called upon to perform upon a tight rope in a style differing essentially from the celebrated Blondin. 'Honesty is the best policy'—gentlemen—a timely precaution may save your lives. . . ." The good advice came to nought, however, and the *News* itself was hit where it hurt most, in the larder. Byers unlimbered on December 21:

Some unprincipled scamp, not having the fear of our devil,⁹ and the city dads before his eyes, has got in the habit of milking our cow—that same old brindle one, whose milk we depend upon to lubricate our mush and flavor our coffee. The thief perhaps does not know how near starvation this brings us, and we would like to have him call and talk the matter over.

That same fellow, or his brother, has been stealing our wood from the door, after it was cut and prepared for the stove. Our devil, we notice, has for a few days been experimenting with gunpowder to see just how much, inserted carefully in a stick of wood, will be necessary to elevate a medium sized shanty. We assure you his experiments are very interesting, and, if carried into practical effect, must tell on the prospects of somebody's wood pile.

The situation had deteriorated by January 18:

SPECIAL NOTICE.

To the semblance of a man who stole our venison hams:

You miserable, mean, contemptible, thieving scoundrel, you are hereby notified that on Saturday morning last—the morning succeeding the disappearance of our last venison ham—we said to our devil, "prepare for war!"—an order which was music to his ear; and such a

⁹The *News*' first printers' devil was George Collier.

war, too: just equal to his former experience; he having maintained, for over two years, a war of extermination against wolves, skunks, prairie-dogs, rattle-snakes and long-tailed swifts, that inhabit the sandhills just below Fremont's Orchard. . . .

Advertising and subscription revenues apparently were as slim as the editor's diet. On October 27, 1859, Byers made a bold editorial demand for advertising support. He pointed out that there were "now a number of houses doing business exceeding \$50,000 a year and several of them more than three times that amount." They were not supporting the *News* with advertising to match. "Our subscription list, too, is exceedingly small for a community of 4000 persons; it should be increased at least 300 immediately." In another column Byers issued a flat "Last Call" and, "in view of the circumstances, and our urgent necessity for money," published the names of nine men who owed two dollars to two-fifty for subscriptions. "[To be continued Semi-Occasionally]" the list concluded in fair warning to those who didn't want to be posted for bad debts.

A week later, on November 3, there was an editorial entitled ominously, "Debtors":

We have done a large amount of work since we set up our press here, for which we have received no pay. A considerable number of our friends owe us for job-work; which should have been paid long ago. In May last, we printed an "Address to the people of Jefferson", to gratify the ambition of certain political aspirants. We did the work for less than half the price, we took a due bill for the amount which was promised to be paid in two or three days. Not a dime of it has ever blessed our sight, yet it is less than one dollar for each signer of the note. Practically the same thing happened in printing the "Constitution."

Recently a County ticket (20,000 Election Tickets) was wanted, in rushed two gentlemen and ordered two thousand tickets printed immediately. "Well, what about the pay?" we ventured to ask. "Oh, we will collect it tomorrow, or if we do not, we will pay it ourselves."

We done the work; but the first cent of pay has yet to greet our eyes.

Now, gentlemen, one and all, who are indebted to us on old scores, with all due deference to your feelings, we want our pay.

We cannot afford to haul our press and office here, pay freight bills ranging from ten to sixty cents a pound for paper and ink; pay office rent, compositors; work for nothing and board ourselves: just to tickle your vanity, to display your name in print, to help you to a fat office, to enhance your property in value, nor to furnish you a paper just for the honor of doing it.

We want each and all of you to call on us without delay, settle up your accounts—pay us money if you can—some thing else, if you can-

not pay money—or if you can do neither, let us know when you can pay, so that we may know what to depend on.

We want to pay our debts, and to do so we must collect our dues; peac[e]ably if we can, forcibly if we must.

The plain talk seems reasonable enough. But all it brought Byers was a challenge to pistols for two.

Denver had in these days a number of Southerners who carried themselves as gentlemen and boasted of a taste for cold bourbon, hot blood, and jealous honor. The McClure-Whitsitt duel has been mentioned. Byers had denounced it as “another stain cast upon the name of our fair young city, to be taken up and enlarged upon by the correspondents of the Eastern press.”

Among the names of the delinquent debtors the *News* now published was that of a friend of Thomas Warren, pioneer ferryman and brick-maker, and a Southerner. Warren took offense and sent a challenge to Byers. The editor replied in the *News* for November 24:

. . . To any who may feel like calling us out, we have only to remark that you will only waste your time in inditing and sending us challenges, or other belligerent epistles. You may murder us, but never on the so-called field of honor under the dignified name of a duel. . . .

While we do live and conduct a public press, it shall be free and unfettered, fearless to rebuke the wrong and uphold the right. . . .

Duels, Byers said, were a “relict of barbarism which has descended to us from the dark ages.” Moreover, and getting very practical about the matter, he admitted that “our right arm is almost powerless from the effect of an unfortunate gun-shot” (the shotgun blast he had received in Omaha a year earlier).

Byers does not seem to have educated his community out of its barbarous ways, however. The following March prides again became ruffled, this time fatally. L. W. Bliss, secretary of the Territory of Jefferson, was an ardent anti-slavery man. In a patriotic toast at an assemblage of leading citizens in the Pacific House he dropped some remarks which Dr. J. S. Stone, Dixie-born judge of the miners’ court at Mountain City, construed to be both personal and offensive. They wrangled, and a glass of wine was dashed in Dr. Stone’s face. This was too much. The doctor challenged on the spot. The duel was fought March 7. Bliss chose shot-guns loaded with ball at a distance of thirty paces. Dr. Stone fell mortally wounded with the first shot.

Denver was less than two years old and had a population certainly not exceeding 4000 persons. But the 4000, plus itinerants, had managed to chalk up the rather startling record of fifteen murders (one by ax, another by butcher knife, and the remainder prosaic shootings), two duels (plus one that misfired), innumerable acts of mayhem of ingenious

variety (one man had his ear bitten off in a catch-as-catch-can competition, another lost the tip of his nose), and assorted thievery which carried off everything that could be lifted. For some reason armed robbery does not seem to have been a problem. At that, the secret vigilantes—Denver called hers the Committee of Safety—were kept busy enough. Byers appears to have been a member of the committee, possibly even one of its organizers; his moral code outlawed duels as barbaric, but a little indignant lynching was no more than the duty of any right-minded and public-spirited citizen.

Much has been made of the West's vigilantes as inevitable improvisations in the absence of other means to law and order and as effective deterrents to homicide and horse stealing. Inevitable they certainly proved to be; for they appeared in one form or another in nearly every frontier community which was west of the law. A town would stand for just so much before it struck back in defense of homes, businesses, and tranquillity with impromptu justice and hemp. But deterrents they certainly were not, if the Denver record is typical. Western violence appears to have been a public mood, and it fed upon lynching as easily as upon quick-tempered murder. Denver's murder-a-month pace in a population of hamlet proportions continued unabated throughout the campaign of the Committee of Safety, and it ended only when the laggard law arrived with full-time sheriffs to enforce it even-handedly.

Denver, to be sure, sought to give her hanging-tree justice the trappings of a legal procedure. In most, not all, of the executions in 1859 and 1860 a "People's Court" sat upon the case, sometimes in a saloon, sometimes in the street. A judge and two associates were chosen by acclamation, prosecuting and defense attorneys by the same means, and a jury selected from among the bystanders, who already had made up their minds about both the guilt and the fate of the culprit. The formalities of a trial then were run through. The jury's verdict, once arrived at, was submitted to the crowd for confirmation by voice vote. There were few acquittals in cases involving capital offenses, and he would have been a brave and rash man indeed who voted "No" when all about him were yelling "Aye." Nonetheless, it occurred—once. On June 24, 1860, in the trial of William T. Hadley for the fatal carving of J. B. Card with a butcher knife, a single negative response was heard when Judge William Person asked the crowd of four hundred if the verdict was just. The name of the dissident, obviously a scalawag and probably drunk, has not been preserved.

It can be said in behalf of the People's Courts that the men they condemned to dance from cottonwood limbs appear to have been villains of the deepest dye and guilty as sin, but then, of course, the record has been in the hands of the aye-voters and the same prominent and outraged men who served anonymously on the Committee of Safety. In later years Byers said of the summary methods:

We never hanged on circumstantial evidence. I have known a great many such executions, but I don't believe one of them was ever unjust. But when they were proved guilty, they were always hanged. There was no getting out of it. No, there were no appeals in those days; no writs of errors; no attorneys' fees; no pardon in six months. Punishment was swift, sure and certain. Murderers almost always confessed their crimes.¹⁰

In the midst of the lawlessness, however, the *News* questioned the value of the People's Courts even while left-handedly endorsing the vigilantes. Following one of the hangings, the paper editorialized on September 5, 1860:

Much as we deprecate mob violence, or the working of Lynch law,—and no one can be more conscientiously or sincerely opposed to it—we can in the present juncture see no other alternative than to resort to the extreme measures that have been adopted. Our “people's court” has become little better than a farce, and, no other is recognized. If we gather the right inference from what we have been able to learn, every movement of the Vigilance Committee—or whatever it may be called, has been taken with calm deliberation; evidence has been amassed extending back for many months, and in cases only where it has been most conclusive has action been taken.

When Patrick Waters was called up to answer for the killing of Thomas R. Freeman on November 30, 1860, the indictment accused him not only of a slaying but also of offenses against “all the laws of God and man.”¹¹ Waters confessed to the inclusive specifications anyway and was hanged December 21 from a gallows set up on the banks of the Platte at the far end of the Fifteenth Street bridge. It was the last execution by a People's Court. The courts were born of grim necessity, perhaps, and no reliable protests against their verdicts have come down through the years, but they were hardly the noble instruments of a stern and temperate justice into which they have been romanced by their apologists. Jerome Smiley wrote of “the majesty of aroused, outraged public sentiment; the quiet, awful determination of those Courts of the People,” and said that “the swift, terrible and unrelenting execution of their irrevocable decrees, appalled the more wanton ruffians and brought to their brutal minds a shivering conviction that they could not successfully defy the whole community.” The rhetoric is impressive, but the conclusion is fiction. The ruffians remained unappalled and undeterred, and the community was defied almost daily in the wave of lawlessness which mounted straight through the era of the People's Courts.

It was the reign of the self-styled “Bummers,” and it began with the

¹⁰Smiley, *History of Denver*, p. 349.

¹¹Byers, Bancroft ms. L6; *Rocky Mountain News*, Dec. 20, 1860.

famous "Turkey War" of January 30, 1860. The *News* heralded the affair with an extra, a three-column sheet printed on one side, on February 3. The headline was a crescendo of exclamatory type: "Exciting Times! Citizens in Arms! War Against Claim Jumpers and Thieves! Order vs. 'Bummers' Misrule! The 'Turkey War' of 1860."

The hostilities involved two matters which became thoroughly intermingled in the confusion. In Denver City late-comers jumped several town lots and began building cabins in defiance of the town company. In Auraria the Bummers stole a load of plump turkeys, strong-arming the little Mexican rancher who had brought them up from the southern part of the territory in the hope of profits in the Denver market.

How much duplication of personnel there was between the forces of the Claim-Jumpers and the Bummers is not clear, but there was shooting on both sides of the creek. The Jumpers manned forty loaded rifles when a delegation from the Arapahoe County Claim Club appeared to tear down the offending cabins. The law-and-order platoon made a dignified withdrawal. Then, during the night, someone threw down and chopped up the Jumpers' house logs anyway. They blamed Richard E. Whitsitt, secretary of the town company, and armed patrols took to the streets seeking him. Whitsitt fled over into Auraria.

On *that* side of the creek the aroused citizenry was taking up arms against the Bummers, a gang of low-livers and cutthroats who made the Criterion saloon their headquarters, in the matter of the turkey thefts. The inoffensive *ranchero* had loudly denounced a community which would stand by and permit him to be despoiled of his gobblers. The inevitable public meeting was called and in due course a committee appointed. The investigators reported back that the thievery was the work of Bummers Thomas Clemo, William ("Chuck-a-Luck") Todd, William Harvey, William McCarty, and William ("Buckskin Bill") Karl. There were no recognized police authorities. So the women barred their cabin doors and the men armed themselves and stewed around in the streets waiting for targets of opportunity. The Bummers also were parading the streets, and sooner or later the two forces had to meet.

After dark the Bummers took to stopping all pedestrians. At nine o'clock a shot fired by McCarty grazed the head of W. H. Middaugh as he stood in front of the Vasquez House. Middaugh ducked inside, only to have Harvey shoot at him again through the window. The country's first militia, the Jefferson Rangers (William N. Byers, major), marched in force to the seat of the disturbance but found the Bummers had departed, hurling back threats to fire the town. Thomas Pollock, blacksmith and hangman, encountered McCarty, who displayed unfriendliness and a large bowie knife. Pollock lowered the barrel of his heavy Hawken's rifle on the Bummer's skull. One down. A few minutes later Harvey drew a six-shooter on Pollock, who now had supporting

troops. "The clear click, click, click of cocking pistols didn't suit him [Harvey], and he beat a hasty retreat," the *News* reported.

The outcome of the comic-opera Turkey War is anticlimactic. It ended, without further casualties, with the cracking of McCarty's pate. The Claim-Jumpers agreed to vacate the lots they had invaded, and Todd, Harvey, Clemo, and Karl were run out of town. McCarty is not mentioned in the banishment proceedings; possibly he took his aching head and departed of his own volition. Smiley says: "Several months afterward two or three of the leaders sneaked back but, as they behaved conservatively, they were not hanged." The Turkey War has all the elements of a Keystone-cop comedy, but it cannot have been much of a farce to those who were trying to live peaceably in Denver in 1860. These were indeed, as headlined, "Exciting Times!" A month later there was another murder—buckshot at a range of twenty feet.

The shotgun artist was duly strung up by a People's Court, and the subsequent record is as follows: March had two killings, April one, June two more, and July another pair plus a horsewhipping. Which brings accounts down to the notorious Gordon case and the kidnaping of an editor.

Twenty-three-year-old James A. Gordon was, when sober, an intelligent and well-behaved young man and, it was said, exceptionally kind to his aged mother and father. When drunk, he was a holy terror. On the night of July 18 he took on a load of popskull, shot down the barkeep in a bordello on Arapahoe Street, tottered over to the Denver Hall, and—his aim now was deteriorating—missed in two attempts to shoot another man. He moved on to the Louisiana saloon, where he encountered and took a dislike to John Gantz, an innocent stranger in town from Leavenworth. Gordon knocked Gantz down, chased him into the street, dragged him back, sat on him, held him by the hair and, after four times snapping the trigger on empty chambers, shot him through the head.

Gordon fled town in a shower of bullets. A posse headed by W. H. Middaugh finally ran him to earth in southeastern Kansas Territory. He had to be three times rescued from lynch mobs in Leavenworth, where Gantz had been well and favorably known. Eventually Gordon was returned to Denver, convicted, and hanged in the Cherry Creek bottoms with Middaugh as executioner at the prisoner's request.

Meantime Charley Harrison was adding to his fearsome reputation. Harrison was proprietor of the Criterion saloon and boasted that he planned to kill twelve white men so that he would have a jury of his peers in hell. He said he wouldn't count the eleven "Mexicans and niggers" he had slain.

On July 12, Harrison was gambling in Cibola Hall when a Negro called "Professor" Stark came in and offered to join the game. Stark was a former slave who had purchased his freedom from a Missouri

master and now worked in Denver as a freeman and a blacksmith. How he got the nickname "Professor" is not explained, but apparently Stark was a man of intelligence and some spirit.

Harrison, a tall, suave, and handsome Southerner, was insulted by Stark's proposal to sit down with a white gentleman. He demanded a retraction of the offer and an apology. Stark replied that he was as good as any white man. There are at least two versions of what happened next. One is that Charley simply drew his Colt's and put three bullets into Stark.¹²

The *News* said on July 18 that Stark was a "Mexican Negro" and that he actually had been involved in the game. There was a charge of a "foul hand." Stark said it was a "d—d lie." Harrison countered with choice phrases, and Stark "rejoindered even more insultingly." By the following week the paper had reached its verdict on the affair:

DEATH OF STARK.

Prof. Stark, the Mexican Negro, who was shot on the 12th inst. by the gambler, Charley Harrison, died on the night of the 21st, from the effect of his wounds. From the facts that have transpired since the shooting, we are led to think that the act was wanton and unprovoked; in short a cold blooded murder—if called by its right name—scarcely less enormous than the several others that have occurred recently.

The man who has shot down an unarmed man, and then repeats his shots, while his victim writhes at his feet, until the charges of his pistol are exhausted—even if justified in the first act, is unfit to live in, and an unsafe member of a civilized community. Six shots were fired into Stark, five of them after he had fallen from the effect of the first, which passed completely under the breast bone, from side to side.

Murder is murder, whether committed on the body of an unknown and unsuspected human being, or on that of the highest citizen of the land, although our citizens still persist in making a distinction between the killing of a Wm. West or a Jack O'Neil.

The paper went on to editorialize:

WORDS OF CAUTION.

The rowdies, ruffians, shoulder-hitters and bullies generally, that infest our city had better be warned in time, and at once desist from their outrages upon the people. Although our community has borne their lawless acts with a fortitude, very nearly akin to indifference, we believe that forbearance has ceased to be a virtue, and that the very next outrage will call down the vengeance of an outraged people, in a wave that will engulf not only the actors, but their aiders, abettors and sympathisers

¹²William MacLeod Raine, "The Gordon Case," in Lee Casey, ed., *Denver Murders* (New York, 1946); Raine also reviews the Gordon-Gantz killing and the *Turkey War*.

whoever they may be. One more act of violence will at once precipitate the inevitable fate; and the terrors that swept over the fields of California at various times, and first purified its society, will be re-enacted here with terrible results to outlaws and villains, or else we are no judge of the determined countenances, compressed lips and flashing eyes that we have so frequently met in the last few days.

At any rate Stark was dead, and no one did anything about Charley Harrison except a mild-mannered scribbler with one ineffective wing who picked wild flowers and presided over the exciting contests at the Chess Club.

The *News* had been scolding about the lawlessness and violence all spring. It was unconvinced that the spur-of-the-moment People's Courts did much to diminish crime. Look at what was happening. But the main point the editor wanted to get across to his readers was that this country needed an effective government, statehood preferably, and municipal officers with a budget to hire a sheriff and town marshals. Byers had managed to get the two jealous villages to consolidate on April 3, but that was about as far as it had gone. The elected officials were figureheads, fussed importantly with papers and meetings, and accomplished almost nothing in the way of orderly city government. The town didn't even have a jail in case anyone took a wild notion to lock up some desperado who was hurrahing the streets.

Along with the demands for civic order and organization, the *News* had been giving the back of its hand on every likely occasion to the thimbliggers, cutthroats, and hard-bitten loafers who hung out at the Criterion, the Louisiana, and Cibola Hall. It's hard to say whether Byers actually was as fearless as he seems or merely was carried away in his stubborn determination to convert a sow's-ear village into a silk-purse city. Either way, the *News* got out its indignation type when Gantz was murdered before Stark was dead of his wounds. In the issue of July 25 the paper catalogued and indexed the bloody record, named the Criterion specifically as the poisonous wellspring of contagion and Harrison personally as a blackhearted murderer.

The bully boys in the back room at the Criterion were incensed, in their fashion. The *News* had slandered them, they decided. Harrison, who was canny as well as vicious, appears not to have been unduly disturbed on his own account, but he let his associates build up a head of steam with dark broodings and vows of vengeance. Charley had been denounced by experts, and he probably realized that direct action against the editor would be more likely to raise the town against him than any amount of editorial inkslinging. So he tended his bar and hole card and let his cronies do the fuming. A crowd of them, led by Carroll Wood and George Steele, finally decided on July 31 to carry out their threats

to put an end to the nosy editor and his eloquence. They tossed off another round of drinks and headed for the *News* office.

The delegation burst in on Byers and his force of printers, Wood flourishing a pistol and uttering what are described for posterity as "vile oaths." The desperado grabbed Byers by the collar and thrust a pistol in his face, demanding that he accompany the crowd to the Criterion. One of the printers, George L. Sanborn, had run upstairs into the attic with a rifle, which he now aimed down between the joists. He threatened to shoot if Byers would give the word. Byers told him to hold his fire, that he would go along peacefully.

When the editor and his kidnapers arrived at the Criterion, Harrison was behind the bar. His handsome face darkened with anger when he saw what his troops were up to. Byers was somewhat more precise, granting ellipsis, than the other historians in describing the conversation that followed. He says Harrison grabbed Wood by the arm and demanded, "What in h—I do you mean by this?"

"We brought Byers here for you to settle with," the baffled Wood replied. He had expected approval, not anger. "He called you a murderer."

Harrison thrust Wood aside and led Byers through the gambling hall to a back room. He pressed a pistol into the editor's hand and showed him a rear door. Go back to the *News*, he said, arm your force and "be ready for the s—s of b—s." (The quotation, again, as Byers recorded it.)

Byers took the advice. Windows and doors were barricaded and preparations made to resist siege. With Byers and Sanborn in the building were John Dailey, Jack Merrick of the *Pioneer*, Joseph Wolff, a man named Clark, and possibly others, including young George Collier, the printers' devil. Shortly the attack began. Steele rode up on horseback, wheeled, passed by at a gallop, and fired in through a window. The shot whistled past the editor's table. Steele made "indecent gestures" and fired again into the office. Merrick replied with a shotgun and caught Steele in the back and hip. Then Merrick traded ineffective shots with Wood, who was sheltered behind a neighboring cabin. The wounded Steele slumped in his saddle but managed to ride off.

The shots roused the town. Word was passed that Byers had been killed. Crowds began to gather in the streets, and Tom Pollock emerged from his smithy with his shotgun. About the same time Steele rode back up the street. He and Pollock fired at the same time, but the smith's aim was better. Steele toppled to the ground with a charge of buckshot in his head. He died that afternoon.

Wood was seized and placed on trial next day. The sentence was banishment. He and several of his fellows moved out about six miles and camped, and John Dailey's diary for August 3 says Wood "sent word back to Byers in the evening that he had no ill feelings against Byers

and if it was ever in his power to befriend him he would do it." Wood later became a leader of Confederate bushwhackers in Missouri and was killed in a drunken brawl in Texas in 1865.

Wood's departure did not entirely restore peace. There were other threats against Byers' life and rumors of violent plans for the entire *News* establishment. The office became for a time an arsenal. A contemporary illustration shows rifles standing at the ready beside printers at their cases. Mrs. Byers said later: "I experienced the horror of seeing desperate men hiding behind a low shed waiting to shoot my husband as he came from the office. Nothing but a disguise changed every night prevented his assassination."¹⁸

Less than a month after the kidnaping someone tried to burn down the *News* plant. The paper of September 25 gives the story:

Incendiary.—An attempt was made last Monday night 17th inst., to burn the *News* office by firing some shavings and refuse lumber in the basement. Fortunately a light shower dampened the air, so that the fire went out before extending beyond the material used for its kindling. It will be remembered that a severe gale blew for several hours that night, and every citizen can imagine what would have been the result if the fire had once got under way. A large portion of our inflammable city would have been swept away like chaff before the wind. We have not alluded to the fact, because we deemed silence best to enable us to detect the perpetrator in which we have succeeded to our full satisfaction, though the proof is not such as would secure conviction. We warn our citizens to be careful and watchful for incendiaries. It is certain that we have such in our midst, and the man who will voluntarily fire a building, thereby endangering the whole city, and scores of human lives will not scruple to take life singly for spite or for spoil.—We would expect him to waylay and stab in the dark. And he who will incite the act by promise of reward is if any odds the worst man of the two.

Charley Harrison smoked his angular cheroots, fingered his brocaded vest, and maintained an air of calm superiority through the whole affair, and no one molested him. He began to profess friendship and high regard for the editor who had called him a wanton murderer. For his part Byers was grateful and always credited the gambler with having saved his life in the *Criterion* that day. Charley had a large ring made of native gold and mounted with a Masonic emblem—both he and Byers were Masons—and presented it to the editor as a token of esteem. Byers kept the ring the rest of his life, and on the wall of his office hung the shotgun that killed Steele. In the midst of this season of good feeling Harrison moved ahead toward his declared objective of a jury of victims

¹⁸Ralph L. Crosman, "Early Colorado Newspapers and Editors," *University of Colorado Bulletin*, Vol. XXV, No. 11 (April 1935), p. 35.

to judge him in the after world. On December 2 he killed James Hill while pretending to embrace him. The jury said it was self-defense. Not long thereafter the notorious Charley left Denver never to return. His end belongs in another part of the story.

Two disinterested and non-combatant witnesses can be called upon for testimony about these days of bloodletting. Albert Richardson and Thomas Knox were sojourning at Denver and Golden City. Their brief affiliations with the *News* did not come until later in the fall of 1860, but they were on the scene and they knew all the principals. Reported Richardson:

It was a fascinating country for a journalist. Over his devoted head daily and nightly hung the sword of Damocles. An indignant aspirant for Congress meeting the editor of the *Denver Herald* in the street spat in his face. Mr. Byers of the *News*, whose establishment after the first murderous assault was a well stocked armory, had his office fired and his dwelling burned, but by taking a bold stand verified the proverb that threatened men live long.¹⁴

Knox offered a brief critique on the *News* and its editors in addition to a report on their joint perils:

. . . It is now by far the best daily and the most attractive weekly newspaper west of St. Louis. Its editors are human curiosities, and worthy of niches at Barnum's. The senior was "raised" in Ohio. He has been a pioneer settler in Iowa, Nebraska, Oregon and Pike's Peak; has acted as Government surveyor in all those territories, excepting the last; has been four times over the plains; was once shot and badly wounded in an attempt to quell a riot; and on numerous occasions has listened to the pleasing whistle of a bullet in close proximity to his head. The junior [Bliss], an ardent admirer of a huge meerschaum, is by birth a New-Yorker. He has published papers in Buffalo, Chicago, Melbourne, New-Zealand, Peru and California. Australia and adjacent lands, many isles of the Pacific, South America, and all parts of the United States, have received the impress of his restless foot, and where next he may turn up, it is difficult to imagine. A novelist might make a fine two-volume romance from the history of these two men. If he had, in addition, the career of each of the workmen in the composing and press-rooms—no less than four of whom have been editors of daily papers in various parts of the Union—the "Scottish Chiefs" would be a mere nothing.

Journalism at Pike's Peak, like the course of true love, does not run smooth. Repeated shots have been fired at the *News* office by indignant "roughs"; the editors have been assaulted at various times, and on a few occasions their lives have been in great jeopardy. . . . Every few weeks a threat of cleaning out the *News* office was made by its enemies,

¹⁴Richardson, op. cit., p. 305.

and the whole corps, from the "devil" upward, is prepared to resist such a purifying process. The sanctum abounds in guns and revolvers, always at hand; and in squally times each man in the composing-room has a "six-shooter" by the side of his copy. The foreman [Dailey] sports a huge "navy" at his belt, and the roller-boy is ready to support the honor of the establishment with the weapon of his branch of trade. Pleasant business, publishing newspapers at Pike's Peak.¹⁵

¹⁵Knox, *The Knickerbocker*, *ibid.*

CHAPTER EIGHT

The News Becomes a Daily

THE ROCKY MOUNTAIN NEWS was being published with "tolerable regularity," come hellions and, a little later, high water.

Circumstances considered, the regularity was a small monument to rugged determination, perhaps even rash stubbornness. Only bullheadedness or a vision could have kept Byers and Dailey at work. Probably they foresaw that this unlikely and uncomely village of theirs eventually would become a town in which it would be worth while to publish a newspaper, but if so it was a dogged prescience and entirely unjustified on the surface. Denver was dirty, ugly, and hazardous. The newspaper was doing no more than paying day wages, at best. The year 1860 brought another large wave of emigration, but again only a small fraction of it stayed on; in 1861 there was almost no emigration, and the *News* watched the roads from the East wistfully all spring to no avail. With the outbreak of war the rest of the country forgot all about Denver. The Pike's Peak country was abandoned to isolation. Yet Byers and Dailey clung on.

After the initial effort on April 23, 1859, the *News* skipped the April 30 issue. Everyone was up at the Gregory Diggings trying his hand at prospecting. The next three issues were dated May 7, 14, and 28, missing the twenty-first. There was also no paper on June 4, and Nos. 5 and 6 of Vol. 1 both are dated June 11. No. 8 (June 25) was a four-column extra about mining progress and the Gregory Gulch forest fires printed on one side of brown paper. Only two issues appeared in July, on the ninth and twenty-third. Byers left Denver on June 25 to return to Omaha for his family. He displayed genuine Pike's Peak gold in his real estate office there and made a speech extolling the grandeurs and rich prospects of the new country whose herald-voice he was determined to be. When he returned to Cherry Creek the *News* settled into a consistent pattern through the fall and winter. From August 6 through December 28 it appeared each week on schedule. The schedule was shifted around somewhat to conform to arrivals and departures of stages and to fit in with other publishing ventures. The day of issue shifted on September 22 from Saturday to Thursday, and on December 14 was advanced again to Wednesday. For some reason not now apparent the issue of January 4, 1860, is numbered as 34, although the December 28 issue was No.

32. Possibly an extra was printed which has not survived, but there is no evidence in either the December 28 or January 4 issues that this was the case. Byers did number his extras serially with the regular editions. His paper now was coming out on time and faithfully, although it was not always what he would like to have it be. It was only a half sheet on November 24, for example, and Byers apologized to his readers, explaining that his stocks of paper had run low awaiting arrival of an ox freight. "Yesterday we received an eight months' supply of paper and ink, and we do not expect to again be under the necessity of making a similar apology." There were also other occupational hazards. The issue for July 25, 1864, pleads in extenuation that "in putting the form upon the press this afternoon, the first page of the paper was pied, in consequence of which we necessarily issue a half sheet." Extras sometimes were broadsides of three or four columns, printed on one side of the sheet, and when paper supply was short the regular issues often shrank in size to five columns.

As the first anniversary approached in April of 1860, it was a time of stocktaking and pride for editors of the *News*. On April 18 they boldly announced plans for a triweekly or, perchance, a daily edition (if advertisers and subscribers would just fall in step with the march of progress) and called attention to

THE END OF THE VOLUME.

. . . How could we print and publish a newspaper unless there existed a community to sustain it? . . . The enterprise of publishing the *ROCKY MOUNTAIN NEWS*, once so problematical, is a success, fixed and certain. . . .

As far as our own course is concerned we have only a word to say. We have been, and trust we ever shall be, as free as the wind that bloweth where it listeth. We have stood up for what we believed to be the right, regardless of consequences. If we have done any one an injury, it was unintentional; if we have erred, it has been a fault of the head, not of the heart. . . .

On the following Wednesday the *News* entered upon its second year with:

NEW VOLUME.

The second volume of the *Rocky Mountain News* commences with the issue of April 25th, 1860. Over a year has passed since its establishment in this city, in the darkest days the country has ever seen, and notwithstanding the cautions that have been tendered, and the many threats made against us, if we *dared* to publish the truth respecting this country, the *News* has gone steadily forward in its proposed course, speaking plainly the truth, without fear or favor, and the result is that

it stands to day, the most widely known and universally quoted, of any newspaper of its age, ever before published in the United States. And now we have the satisfaction of looking back, and seeing that every report we have published, has been confirmed and every prediction fully verified.

What the *News* has been it shall continue to be, fearless and free as the mountain air we breathe; and in its improvements and additional attractions from time to time; shall fully keep pace with the progress of the country.

The *News* has already a circulation in every State of the Union, save two—all the Territories and both the Canadas.—It is forwarded by express every Thursday morning, and received by its subscribers everywhere with the utmost regularity.

Byers, however, still was receiving poison-pen letters to the editor from persons who didn't agree that everything about the Pike's Peak wonderland was now confirmed and verified. W. G. George of Rockport, Missouri, for one, took his pen in hand. His felicitations appeared in the issue of February 8, 1860:

After viewing your past life in connection with the low dirty infamous sheet you publish I am forced to say you are the grandest Liar and most infamous rascal out of hell alive. Should I speak comparatively of you I would crave the pardon of all devils you are prostituting your calling by base lies to fill your pockets & your intimate Friends cut Throats & low Vagabonds.

I have seen your Mountain Liar filled with two thirds of lies that I know to be such while I was in your Territory. By these tissues of falsehoods you have deceived thousands. But sir Justice is fast on your tracks & ere another six months rolls round you will be paid the penalty with your worthless life of your base deceptions. Men of worth and character have staked their all upon your word & now are left penniless & now have sworn a fearful vengeance upon the author of all their miseries you are now organizing a Ter. be careful the next Territory you will occupy will be foreign and called Hell Hell. I don't conceal my name or purpose. Death & vengeance.

The *News'* postscript commented:

Whew! isn't that refreshing? How we trembled when we read it. Who wouldn't be an editor? Let us see, we were given six months from the 30th of August to prepare for a final reckoning—five months used—time nearly gone—we must cast about. Who wants to be remembered in our will? . . .

Mr. George wrote under date of August 30, the *News* explained, but his letter was delayed in the mails.

Although some of the gobacks remained obstinately unconvinced,

enough gold was coming in and enough growth occurring to permit the "*Mountain Liar*" a reasonable expansion. The *News* even branched out into a modest "chain" operation.

During the campaign leading to the first territorial election in 1861, a campaign which decided whether Colorado would go Union or Confederate, the *News* published the *Miner's Record* at Tarryall in South Park some seventy miles southwest of Denver. Tarryall, located about four miles northwest of the present hamlet of Como, got its name because it was rated a "good spot to stay awhile." Nothing remains of Tarryall today, although in the summer and fall of 1859 it had boomed briefly on the basis of rich placer sands. The story is told that the original prospectors who clung on through the winter to hold their claims appropriated one of the richest pits in the diggings and used it as a "bank." The man who had discovered the pit went back home for the winter months, and while he was gone the other miners drew upon his unexploited wealth when thirst was compelling. The pit became known as the "Whisky Hole."¹ Late arrivals found all the likely claims taken at Tarryall, and they asserted the settlement was misnamed. They called it Grab-All and named *their* nearby town Fair Play.

The *Miner's Record* was started July 4 and had a brief existence. Only eleven issues appeared before the paper suspended on September 14. The *Record* probably was printed on *News* presses in Denver and hauled to South Park by stage or wagon for distribution. During its short span the *Record* had the distinguished Professor Goldrick as its traveling agent, and John Dailey went up to supervise the operation and serve as reporter and editor-on-the-scene. His diaries show the notes upon which the "locals" were built. Though it didn't last long, the *Record* apparently accomplished its main purpose. Election returns from Tarryall gave 158 votes for Congress to the *News'* candidate, Republican Hiram P. Bennet, and cut off Beverly D. Williams with 46.

Earlier the *News* had experimented, also briefly, with another sister paper. During the high tide of the 1860 emigration Byers and Dailey began publishing the *Denver Bulletin and Supplement to the Rocky Mountain News*. The project was announced in the *News* of April 18:

[Figure of pointing hand] "Bulletin."—Merchants, Hotel Keepers, Expressmen, Ranch Keepers and all other advertisers are respectfully notified that we will early in the coming week, commence the publication of the BULLETIN, for gratuitous distribution among the emigrants on the road out. It will be published weekly, semi-weekly or daily, as occasion may require, and the pay justify, and it is the very best advertising medium that can offer.

Send in advertisements by Saturday evening 21st inst., earlier if possible.

¹Norma L. Flynn, "Early Mining Camps of South Park," *Denver Westerners' Monthly Brand Book*, Vol. 7, No. 11 (Nov. 1951), p. 6.

Some hitch must have developed; for the first number of the *Bulletin* did not appear until May 2 as a six-column half sheet printed on both sides.

The giveaway continued as a single broadside sheet of varying size with its editorial content picked up from previous or current issues of the *News*. As a means of extending the power of the *News*, or fattening its owners' lean purses, the *Bulletin* was a rather baffling little enterprise. For while Byers and Dailey exalted it above the *News* as an advertising medium, its space rates were half those of the regular paper and thus must have cut into the principal revenues. The supplement was dated on Wednesdays, the same day as the *News*, but pay did not justify—or the owners became aware that they were undercutting themselves. Only six *Bulletins* appeared—May 2, 9, 16, 23, and 30 and June 6—and it finally dwindled off with a four-column sheet headed merely *Supplement to the Rocky Mountain News*, undated but apparently released during the week of June 18. A similar supplement appeared irregularly without serial numbering between January 25 and July 5 of 1862.

As the *Bulletin* expired Byers and Dailey already were looking forward to even larger undertakings, and new blood was about to enter the firm. Horace E. ("Hod") Rounds, brother of the Chicago publisher and manufacturer of type and printing machinery, Sterling P. Rounds, came to town on the June 13 stage. Edward Bliss, who had been managing editor of Sterling Rounds' *Sunday Leader*, arrived on July 4. Rounds and Bliss planned to give Denver another newspaper, and they had equipment for a printing office on the way. After surveying the field, however, they decided to join forces with Byers and Dailey. Dailey's diary says a consolidation agreement was worked out on July 11, although he gives no details. The new partnership under the name of the News Printing Company went into effect July 19. The *News* of the previous day had announced the company and said additions to the plant in the value of three thousand dollars would be made through the consolidation. The Dailey diary shows that the Rounds and Bliss equipment arrived July 22 by wagon and was unloaded into the *News* plant. Mastheads of the paper beginning July 25 list Bliss and Byers as joint editors. Rounds apparently went into the business end of the operation.

With new equipment in the composing and press rooms, new talent in the editorial office and, presumably, new financing, the *News* now was at last ready to launch into the long-promised daily publication. Plans for a daily had been announced as early as April. The June 13 paper said the daily would start in July, and a month later this was amended to "by Aug. 1." On that date the weekly *News* came out in an enlarged seven-column format, but the start of the daily was being held up pending arrival of paper. Meantime, on May 1, Thomas Gibson had come out with his *Daily Herald and Rocky Mountain Advertiser*. Then,

on August 25, James T. Coleman, with the backing of Mayor John C. Moore, brought out his Democratic sheet, the *Denver Daily Mountaineer*, although it was able to issue only fifteen numbers in its first month of operation.

At last the *Daily Rocky Mountain News* appeared on August 27 as the third daily newspaper in a town hardly big enough to support one weekly. Like the enlarged weekly, the daily edition was printed in seven columns on four folio-sized pages. Damp printing methods on a good, rag-made paper were used, and the sheet presented a fair typographical appearance which commanded twenty-five cents a copy or twenty-four dollars a year. The masthead on page two called the paper the *Denver Evening News*, and the objective was to hit the streets between 4 and 5 P.M. As a milestone in the paper's career, the "Salutatory" of the new daily deserves reproduction at some length:

The impatience manifested on the part of our patrons in this city, as well as the interest expressed in the enterprise by our friends in the mountains, has induced us to commence the publication of the *DAILY ROCKY MOUNTAIN NEWS* a week or two earlier than our preparations seemed to warrant. The arrival by express of a small supply of paper, and the confidence that a large invoice now far on the Plains, will soon follow, prompts us to send forth the initial number.

Of its appearance typographically we have no inclination to speak, further than that it is the best we can do until after the arrival of a large amount of new material, which is coming with the paper. It is hardly necessary to promise that our daily and weekly issues, in one month from now, will compare favorably in appearance with any papers published in the western cities of the States.

We do not expect to be able to give that daily variety of news, or invest our paper with the same general interest possessed by our eastern contemporaries. The facilities afforded by a score of telegraph lines, which throw their iron net-work over a region of many thousand square miles, gathering in the pulsations of the great public heart, are not only here wanting, but even our postal arrangements are yet in their infancy, and consequently very imperfect. But in this mountain region we hope to garner sufficient items of local interest to make the *DAILY NEWS* a welcome visitor in the counting rooms and offices of our business men; in the cabins of the hardy miner, and in the open field tents of the daring prospector, in his toil. . . .

It is not our purpose to make the *NEWS* the organ or mouthpiece of any party, sect or organization. The editors entertain political opinions, but the expression of them here, where none have a voice in the selection of rulers, seems to us supererogatory. In a new country like this, where no good can possibly result from distinct political organization, it appears to be a waste of time and space to devote the same to political discussions. The development of the resources of this wonderful region, and the promotion of the best interests of those who are identified

with its growth and prosperity—seems to us to offer the most useful and most welcome field for journalistic effort. We do not wish to be misunderstood in reference to this matter.—The great struggle now going forward at the East, between the mighty political parties, has awakened in us a deep interest, and we shall watch the result with intense solicitude. But our preferences and predilections will not be made public through these columns.

Having a numerous corps of talented and spicy correspondents in the various mining districts—most of them daily devotees of the rocker, the tom and the more formidable crusher—our columns will contain a daily reflex of the experiences, the success and the prospects of the different localities. We shall aim to give truthful, reliable reports of the results of mining operations in every gulch or ravine where the stalwart arm of industry is delving in the earth, and to this end we enjoin upon our correspondents great care in the collection of statistics and figures upon this subject. The truth is what will redoun[d] most to the credit and prosperity of this region, and let it be told under all circumstances.

In our intercourse with our contemporaries we shall always aim to be courteous, manly and just; ever holding ourselves in readiness to make ample amends for all wrongs or injuries we may unwittingly commit. It is our earnest wish to maintain with them personal relations of the most friendly character.

As public journalists we shall endeavor to mete out even and exact justice to all. Depending for much that will appear in our columns upon rumors—not always well authenticated—it is not unlikely that we may at times do injustice to individuals. It shall be our greatest pleasure, under such circumstances, to make complete and honorable reparation for the offence.

To set forth at greater length the course we intend to pursue, seems unnecessary. Our former efforts as conductors of a weekly journal, have generally met the approval of the public, and we do not propose now that we are at the helm of a daily craft, to adopt a new system of reckoning, or venture over an untried track. We shall do the best we can, and do it often.

Thus the *News* declared itself out of the great political battles then raging on the eve of the Civil War, at the same time taking a slap at the new *Daily Mountaineer* for its open Democratic leanings. Byers was a Republican and boasted of it, but the *News* had been campaigning for territorial, state, and municipal governments and, as he explained later, he felt the situation was complex enough and the local rivalries already sufficiently bitter without the admixture of Democratic-Republican divisions on national issues. Putting itself on the side lines politically also was the better part of valor for the *News*; there still was a considerable Southern element in the town, and some of the men from Dixie held the more important positions in business and civic leadership.

The salutatory also outlines a course of conduct vis-à-vis the other papers which, in the case of Gibson's *Herald*, was abandoned almost immediately. No file of the *Herald* survives, and so it is not known precisely what the provocations were, but the *News* took after Gibson and his paper with vehemence and personal jibes. The *Herald* commented on one of Byers' frequent chasings-off to the mountains and suggested he was fleeing threats. The *News* jibed back on September 10:

"The Editor of the *Herald* has not gone to the mountains because he is *afraid* to stay in Denver."—*Herald*.

He that knows nothing fears nothing.

Earlier the *Herald* seems to have taken some glee in the attack of the Bummers on the *News* office and the kidnapping of Byers, perhaps even suggesting the whole affair was justified. An editorial in the *News* for August 8 concludes: "We only hope that GIBSON'S bones may never have a similar cause for becoming an involuntary rattle-box." The newspaper quarrel grew more and more bitter and personal. Said the *News* on September 17:

WANTED.—At the *Herald* office, a small boy who has advanced at least twenty pages in Sander's First Reader, to read proof and correct the 'orrid orthography of some of the *Herald* correspondents. Such a lad who will take coffee mills in weekly payments, can secure a permanent situation.

This was followed up September 19 with

—An apology is due to our readers for the space devoted to the *Herald* in the letter of our Mountain City correspondent. It is not our design to cumber our space, or disgust their taste by any reference whatever to that scurrilous lying sheet, or its imbecile editor.

The *News* took a malicious delight in Gibson's cockney *h*-dropping, and brought illustrations into the fight. On October 8:

"No Proscription."—A life-like portrait of the sensation editor of the *Herald*. Copyright secured:

[Figure of an ass]

On August 29:

[Figure of pointing hand] The spirit of this morning's *Herald*:
[A bottle]

And on May 11, 1861:

Accurate Likeness
of the

[Figure of man with bellows for head]

Blower of the *'Erald*

[Taken by a Denver white-washer, with one hand tied behind him.]

The whole squabble must have become tiresome after the first few exchanges to readers of both the *Herald* and the *News*, but it continued unremittingly until Gibson sold out his paper, by then renamed the *Commonwealth and Republican*, on January 1, 1864, and went back to Omaha.

By contrast, relationships between the *News* and the *Daily Mountaineer*, despite its secession sympathies, were on a neighborly basis of over-the-back-fence borrowings. The *News* made a polite bow to its Democratic contemporary on September 11, 1860:

We are under obligation to friend Coleman of the *Denver Mountaineer*, for a supply of paper on which to print our to-morrow's Weekly. Such favors are highly appreciated, and we shall not be backward to reciprocate them, when occasion offers.

John Dailey's journal for 1860 shows that he loaned Coleman a half bundle of paper not long thereafter, and a few weeks later "two shts colored card board."

George West watched the situation gleefully from his post, out of line of fire, on the *Western Mountaineer* in Golden. He commented pungently:

THREE DAILY PAPERS.—Denver is probably the only city in the world of less than five thousand inhabitants in which three daily papers are issued. Of course, the business is greatly overdone, and some of them must die out one of these fine mornings. It is impossible, however, to predict the time with exact precision, for newspapers, like toads shut up in a dark cellar, are characterized by a wonderful amount of vitality, and live upon nothing for an almost incredible period.

The *News*, which knew all about living on next to nothing, was amused by the item and republished it on September 20.

Coleman's *Daily Mountaineer* was the first to succumb. It was sold to the *News* in May 1861, and publication ceased. By that time Colorado Territory was definitely in the Union camp, and there was little comfort or profit in publishing a Democratic journal in Denver. Byers told H. H. Bancroft: "The editors and proprietors of the *Mountaineer* went south within a few days after sale of the paper, and one of them [Coleman], in trying to get through the Union lines was shot by a picket and had

one of his arms shattered from the wrist to the elbow. The other publisher [Moore] of the Mountaineer went south and became chief quartermaster of Hood's division of the Confederate army and served during the war and afterwards started a paper in Kansas City."² Moore later returned to Pueblo, Colorado, where he became a prominent citizen.

The time would come when the *News* also would swallow up the descendant of Gibson's irksome *Herald*.

Through these days of consolidations and expansions the *News* did not remain static physically, either. The attic room of Dick Wootton's pioneer skyscraper in Auraria did not long meet the needs of frontier newspaper publishing. Moreover, the paper wished its custom to embrace both of the jealous villages and could not therefore become solely identified with either. So it bounced back and forth across Cherry Creek seeking to establish a neutrality.

On the southwest end of the bridge which today carries Market Street across Cherry Creek is a bronze plaque, placed there by the Colorado State Historical Society in 1934, marking the approximate location of the newspaper's birth. The *News* gratefully participated in the unveiling of the plaque on its seventy-fifth anniversary, but the bronze words perpetuate several errors in addition to saying nice things about the city's pioneer journal. The legend reads: "On this site stood the original home of the Rocky Mountain News, first newspaper established in the 'Pike's Peak Gold Region.' Founded by William N. Byers April 23, 1859. Champion of law and order in 'Jefferson Territory'; advocate of faith in emerging Colorado. Located on neutral ground between pioneer towns, Denver and Auraria. Building and press lost in great Cherry Creek flood, May 19, 1864."

The bronze plaque comes closer to marking the site of the fourth than the first home of the *News*. Dick Wootton's leaky attic, in which the paper received its baptism of melted snow water, was several blocks away as Denver now is laid out, at what would be about 1413-15 Eleventh Street in the present Wazee produce market. On the first map of the Cherry Creek towns the location would have been near the corner of Fourth and Ferry streets, Auraria. The *News* was issued from the attic through the summer and into the fall of 1859. Byers and Dailey talked about building but between publishing a newspaper and rushing off to hunt gold didn't get around to it. In September, "Uncle Dick" decided to sell his pioneer storehouse-saloon-meeting hall. Byers made an offer, but it was sold to an earlier bidder. So on October 15 the presses and type cases were moved across the creek into Denver City to a temporary location in the log cabin of Sam Kime.³ The cabin perched on the edge of the creek bottoms at the southeast corner of McGaa (present Market)

²Typescript, Bancroft Library Pac Ms. L8, op. cit.

³John L. Dailey diaries, Western History Collection, Denver Public Library.

Street and E (Fourteenth) Street. Kime's cabin later housed the Denver and Auraria Reading Room, the city's first library, and the school of Lydia Marie Ring. "Old" City Hall was built on the site in 1882-83, facing on the next street above Market, Larimer. It lasted as the seat of municipal government until 1932, when the new City and County Building was completed at Civic Center. For another eight years the old building with its bell and clock tower saw service as police headquarters before it finally was abandoned in May 1940. Shortly thereafter it was torn down, and the site now is a municipal parking lot with the bell from the tower preserved as a monument about where Sam Kime's log shanty once stood.

The cabin in Denver City was a get-by for Byers and Dailey. They were building their own log printing office about a block away to the southwest—across the creek in Auraria again. They moved in late in December during a cold snap, which, Dailey says, sent the thermometer down to 39 below and froze the mercury in the tube. This building, the first actually built as a printing plant, was near the intersection of Front (Thirteenth) and Fourth (Walnut) streets, about the same distance south of the creek as Sam Kime's place was north. The present location would be approximately 1301 Walnut Street. Byers and his family temporarily occupied the rear of the story-and-a-half building as their home, and the printers, who boarded at the Byers table, lived in another cabin next door to the north. A photograph of the third *News* building, taken in 1900 during its last, sway-backed days, survives. After the paper left it the structure became a guardhouse during the Civil War, the city jail, and finally a city stables and hangout for tramps. When it was dismantled there was some talk of re-erecting it in City Park as a pioneer museum. John Dailey had the logs hauled to the yard of his home. But the proposal came to naught, and the square-hewn timbers gradually disappeared as firewood. A section of one of them is preserved as a memento in the office of the editor of the *News*.

By June of 1860 business had expanded sufficiently that the *News* was ready to move again. It built for itself a new frame building about a hundred feet to the north on Fourth Street, and it is this building that the bronze plaque marks.

It was an odd sort of house. The dimensions were 24 by 47 feet, and it rose on pilings from a triangular plot of "worthless" land, mostly sand, in the very bed of Cherry Creek. Byers said he chose the spot because it was "neutral ground" between the two cities, now consolidated but still not entirely happy about the wedding. The site frequently has been described as the "middle of Cherry Creek." It wasn't, quite, nor was it no man's land between the two towns. The Fosdick and Tappan map of 1859 shows that the site was in Block 241, Auraria, and at least one building, the Earl Brothers Music Hall, soon was built between the *News* and the trickle of water which divided Auraria and Denver.

With plenty of flat and higher ground to build on, both the cities crowded close to the meandering bed of the presumably innocent stream. Rough streets were graded up to a level perhaps six feet above the sands, and the new *News* building had to have a bridgelike walk to carry traffic from Fourth Street to its front doors. The street-level main floor had the editorial and press rooms. There was an attic in which the printers lived, and with further expansion of business Dailey walled in the pilings below to form a basement storeroom and job-printing department. On the roof was a large sign which proclaimed the home of the *Rocky Mountain News* to all comers. A tall lodgepole pine was trimmed into a flagstaff to stand by the front walk. Dailey records that he slept in the new office for the first time on May 18, helped build the walk on May 25, and moved the printing equipment in on June 2. The paper dated June 6 announced:

A recent removal of our office has prevented our giving this week's issue as much attention as we could wish; particularly to the "Bulletin" for distribution among the emigrants.

Our office is in the large frame building in the middle of Cherry creek, under the sign of the American flag, at which place emigrants are invited to call and register their names.

It was from this building that Byers was kidnaped, and in it the *News* became a daily. Out of its windows one could look down, a hundred feet or so, on the little creek which carried hardly enough water to wet a whistle. Dailey's diary tells of how he would take a clean shirt and hike over to the Platte, perhaps half a mile away, for a bath.

The much-traveled Imperial and Double Medium Washington hand presses were installed in the stilted building, but before long they were joined by the first power press to cross the plains to Pike's Peak, a steam-driven Guemsey. It arrived July 7, and Dailey reports it in operation on July 15. Soon thereafter, probably as a result of the entry of Bliss and Rounds into the firm, another power press, a clumsy Northrup cylinder "threshing machine," went into the plant.

With these presses the *News* was turning out 1600 to 2000 copies of the weekly paper and much of the commercial and governmental printing of the town. It printed the shares of the consolidated Denver City company, and earlier had put on paper the "Laws and Regulations of the Miners of the Gregory Diggings District," the first attempt at a local legal code in a country where other laws were inoperative and little recognized. A pamphlet of standing rules for the House of Representatives of the Territory of Jefferson came from the *News*' presses, along with tickets for balls, community sociables, and the Cibola Minstrels. Business cards cost twenty dollars a thousand at the *News* in 1861, handbills five dollars a hundred and ball tickets ten dollars a

hundred. When the *News* "went daily" in August 1860 the paper claimed a circulation which began at 500 copies and climbed slowly to perhaps 700 the following year.

In addition to John Dailey, the printers who manned the cases and presses included, at various times, Charles S. Semper, George L. Sanborn, W. W. Whipple, Bill Summers, Mark Blunt, Nathan A. Baker, Frank Roff, Harry Stafford, James P. Oliver, Copeland Rabe, and Byers' brothers-in-law, the Sumner boys, Robert, Charles, John, and Will. Jack Sumner and Oramel G. Howland, another *News* printer, were with John Wesley Powell in 1868 on the expedition which first explored the Colorado River. Howland was killed by the Shivwits Indians in Utah; Howland Butte in the Grand Canyon is named for him, and Sumner Point for the other *News* member of the expedition.⁴ One of Howland's fellow workers in the *News* print shop was Albert Auer, later foreman of the Government Printing Office in Washington. Jack Merrick was in and out of the plant and, after the Carroll Wood-George Steele affair, was rated "a good shot with a rifle." Until his father, the irascible Thomas, pulled out, young Henry Gibson was a *News* printer. Others mentioned at various points in the record include Irwin Sansom, P. W. Case, T. C. Brown, Thomas S. Tucken, L. A. and W. J. Curtice, James and Harry Creighton, H. E. Turner, "Pap" Hoyt, Joseph Wolff, and Richard Sherriff. One of the force, James L. Lee, became president of the Challenge Machinery Company in Chicago. The devil, George M. Collier, learned his trade and set himself up as printer-editor in his own right. He founded the daily and weekly *Black Hawk Journal* in 1872.

Dailey noted down the arrivals and departures of his highly fluid force of printers in his pocket journals, and kept accounts on their lost time in the memoranda pages. The names Merrick, Stone, J. R. Devor, Semper, Ruff, Tucken, Sanborn, Martin, Chet Langdon [or Sangdon], Sam Bolster, Cummings, and Robert Anes [or Aner] appear in the 1859 and 1860 diaries.

Bolster "lost a day and a half from the 12th," the careful foreman recorded, and Anes "one day from the 12th." On June 11, 1860, "Martin got his back up in the evening and concluded to leave. Settled off with him & let him slide." Dailey also notes the signing on of the *News*' first female employee but fails to give her name. March 29, 1860: "Hired a girl this evening."

Merrick, it appears, not only was "jolly" and a marksman but also somewhat irregular in showing up for work. Dailey charges him frequently with lost time and records that on June 31, 1860, "Jolly Jack" was missing from the shop "from 10 till night." Conviviality may be an explanation; for the pioneer fraternity of printer's ink apparently enjoyed a close fellowship which now and then bubbled up into elaborate town-

⁴See Wallace Stegner, *Beyond the Hundredth Meridian* (Boston, 1954).

painting. Dailey says that on July 3 he and his men were "Busy at work to get the paper up. Got to work at it in the evening. Worked at it until late at night and devoured several bottles of choice fluid, the effects of which were to exhilarate [sic] the company." On July 14 the new typographical union held forth: "Typo meeting in the evening, generally attended. Golden City boys down. Had a spree after meeting and all next day."

Charlie Semper, who had set type for the first issue, offered to quit the paper in December 1859, when his pay was cut to twenty dollars a week, but he stayed on to work out a balance due the office and Byers and Dailey decided to keep him at twenty-five dollars a week. The matter of wages came to issue in the spring of 1860. Dailey "sent the printers a note this evening [April 21] cutting down their wages." The result was Denver's first strike—on the day of the paper's first anniversary.

"Boys struck this morning," Dailey's diary for April 23 says, "and declined going to work at the rates we proposed. The day disagreeable, they took it pretty hard—That is, loafing."

Tucken, although he was an officer of the union, went back to work the next day, and by the twenty-sixth "the boys begin to feel like compromising matters, and Jack [Merrick] appoints a printers' meeting for tonight at the *News* office. We met in the evening, the meeting composed of all the jours [journeymen] and Mr. G [Gibson] and myself and the jours reconsidered the bill of prices and came down to ours." Sanborn and Merrick were on the job next day, but Charlie Semper was bitter and switched allegiance to Gibson's *Herald* temporarily. Exactly what the wages were at this point is not in the record, although Dailey records that beginning February 12, 1865, the scale was seventy-three cents an hour for the evening (daily) paper and eighty cents an hour for night work (usually on the weekly or commercial printing), twenty-seven dollars by the week with a three-dollar differential for the foreman.

The pay scale certainly fell short of providing the means for high living, oyster suppers with scarlet ladies on the "row," or bucking the gambling hells. A young *News* bookkeeper, reputedly a member of a prominent Pennsylvania family, had tastes along those lines, and he accomplished what probably has occurred to every person with normal criminal instincts: he robbed the United States Mint.

Twenty-one-year-old James D. Clarke, a little man with a "genteel address," quit his job of grubbing over the *News* account books and on December 30, 1863, was appointed pay clerk of the Denver mint. He carried with him high recommendations from Hiram P. Bennet, Colorado territorial delegate to Congress, and Mayor Amos Steck. A few weeks later, however, the *News* was carrying announcement of a thousand-dollar reward for the capture of its former accountant.

Clarke had filched \$36,817.05 from the mint on February 13, 1864,

and "absconded on horseback," riding a one-eyed livery-stable sorrel with a tolerably long tail and saddle galls. He had paused only long enough to settle up a few gambling debts and buy himself a brace of handsome and costly Navy Colts. Then he lit out for Mexico. The *News* described the case as "one of the most serious, strange events that have occurred [sic] in our country's history." The little bookkeeper was "galloping into the grim abyss of infamy eternal."

He didn't get away with it, although there is no record that he ever did time for his almost successful speculations. He was captured near Pueblo and all but \$4419 of the swag recovered. Clarke escaped from jail once, but hung around Denver sleeping on a couch in the shadows under the stage of the Denver Theater and hiding in the groves near Jim Beckwourth's ranch up the Platte. He was recaptured. It has not been determined that he ever was tried or sentenced. The embezzlement charge against him was dropped in 1867.

How he turned the robbery is detailed on the rice-paper sheets of the Denver mint's ninety-three-year-old letter books, made public recently by Mrs. Alma K. Schneider, current superintendent. The superintendent in 1864, George W. Lane, reported to Treasury Secretary Salmon P. Chase that his young pay clerk propped the window of his office open with a pencil at quitting time, put the money on the sill, and said good night pleasantly to everyone. Then he went outside and reached in through the window to pick up the stack of treasury notes, gold dollars, and small bar of gold bullion. The bar, cut in two, presumably still lies in the ravine somewhere between Denver and Pueblo where it was secreted and later could not be located.

Lane reported that he and all other officers and employees of the mint, being men of great probity, never frequented the horrible gaming dens, and so they were unaware that their pay clerk had been hitting a streak of bad luck (or marked cards) and was deep in hock. The superintendent apologetically defended himself in each of his dispatches to Washington: "That I have been deceived in Mr. Clarke is true, but the recommendations I received from men worthy of confidence whose advice I felt it a duty to respect, his well established character for morality and integrity, his superior qualifications and his pride of character induced me to give him the appointment. . . ." "And whether I do or do not remain as Superintendent of this Mint I wish here to say that it was with pride and satisfaction that I reflected over the names of those I had appointed and called to my aid in the management of this institution. . . ." "If I am censurable after a fair hearing and a full knowledge of all the facts, it must be so. . . ." As Lane nervously anticipated, he was held personally accountable for the \$4419 deficit.⁵

⁵Forbes Parkhill documents the Clarke case in "Pioneer Denver Mint Robbery," *The Denver Westerners' Monthly Roundup*, Vol. XIII, Nos. 7 and 8 (July, Aug. 1957).

The Clarke effort has been one of several attempts, indifferently successful, to rob the Denver mint, which today is the well-heeled next-door neighbor of the *Rocky Mountain News*, sitting across Delaware Street from the newspaper plant on underground vaults containing undisclosed billions in gold bricks.

The gold, along with other baser but negotiable currencies, has proved consistently tempting. In 1921 peg-legged Orville Harrington came under suspicion, although he had been a good and faithful mint employee, quiet, meek, and diligent. Then he was arrested for having taken ninety-thousand dollars in gold bars home with him to his modest South Denver bungalow. A favorite Denver legend has been that Orville had his peg leg hollowed out and stomped out the gate each night with, in effect, a gold-lined prosthesis. Actually it wasn't quite that colorful. One of his fellow employees had noticed him fingering a bar and then wrapping it in a bit of cloth. A secret service agent was set to watching Orville and soon found that he was tucking wrapped bars of gold into his clothing when he checked out at night. Agents went out to the Harrington home and dug up the ninety-thousand dollars which the squirrel-like Orville had buried in his basement and back yard. For several years sanguine Denver citizens used to drive by the Harrington home with active little speculations about the possibility there might still be some bars under the garden. The mint said no, that it recovered every ounce of gold that was missing, and it now keeps records to a tolerance of four ten-millionths of an ounce on scales that can weigh a covetous glance.

The next notable mint robbery occurred less than a year later, on December 18, 1922. Lee Casey, for many years Denver's favorite columnist, covered the story for the *News*. He summarized his experience in the preface to a book, *Denver Murders*, which he edited in 1946:

On that morning I was attending a session of the Colorado Supreme Court, pretending, along with seven justices, to listen to soggy arguments about a writ certiorari. Not because he had more confidence in my knowledge of crime than in my acquaintance with judicial procedure, but simply because I was closer to the spot than anyone else on the staff, the city editor directed me through the bailiff to chase myself three blocks west to the mint, which was then being robbed to the accompaniment of considerable gunfire.

I obeyed, of course—I have always wondered how that writ of certiorari came out—and found the situation, as usual, exaggerated. On the lawn in front of the mint was the body of a guard, killed either by a stray shot by the infantry on his side or by a bullet from the enemy. Nobody ever found out which. The robbers had withdrawn and by the curb was a Reserve Bank truck from which \$200,000 in nice, new, passable five-dollar bills was missing, and is missing yet. Scattered about were the sort of people who spring out of the ground

at times like that and get in a reporter's way. Within the building, guarded by steel doors, a platoon of guards directed by Robert J. Grant, superintendent, was firing in the general direction of the gilt on the Capitol dome.

I telephoned a summary of the situation and went to the office to write new leads, precedes, last adds and inserts for every edition through twenty-four hours. If reporters on a morning-and-evening combination dropped dead in those days, as they sometimes did, it seldom was from atrophy.

Promptly, federal, state, county and municipal authorities held a multitude of conferences, offered \$5000 of the taxpayers' money for "information leading to, etc.," and a blatant afternoon newspaper published, with somewhat less than its usual assurance, a tagline that Crime Does Not Pay. Conditions soon became normal and Christmas arrived, the Legislature met, and other topics began to occupy public interest. Then, a month after the robbery, a neighborhood plumber went into a garage he had rented and on which payment was overdue. He found therein a stolen Rickenbacker and a body that was identified as that of one of the mint bandits.

The plumber got \$5000 of the taxpayers' money and officials started issuing more statements. They also urged that newspapers quit referring to "The Mint Robbery" and mention instead "The Robbery of a Federal Reserve Bank Truck in Front of the U. S. Mint," just as though that would fit in a two-column head. The people, instead of being out \$200,000, were \$205,000 shy.

A. A. McVittie, an enterprising restaurateur, attracted business by posting on his window bills whose serial numbers proved they were part of the loot. The \$200,000, it developed, had been peddled in St. Paul at a fifty percent discount, which local experts considered extortionate.

As for arrests, there never was one. . . .

Since then the Denver branch of the United States Mint has enjoyed immunity to unauthorized withdrawals. The guards say that among the thousands of tourists who visit the solid gray building each year the inevitable jocularity is, "Are you giving out samples today?"

Very early in the game, when the mint was still a private enterprise of Clark, Gruber & Company, it and the other pioneer Denver banks had to step lively to keep ahead of con artists with calculations on how gold could be won without digging it. There were some inspired counterfeiting attempts that didn't involve crude coinage.

About the middle of June 1861 bogus gold bricks began to show up in Denver countinghouses. One banker bought twenty thousand dollars worth before he got wise. The counterfeiter was aware that bankers customarily took a penknife shaving off the corner of a gold brick or bar for testing in *aqua regia* before purchase. So he built his dross bricks with genuine gold corners that could pass muster. Then, counting on the cupidity of the human race, including bankers, he would offer a brick at

a discount, pleading the need for quick cash. The frock-coated financiers, quickly calculating the markup and profit, fell for the deal. It worked—for a while—and the red-faced bankers had to explain how they had come to buy what seemed to be gold so cheaply and with so few questions about its shadowy origins. Some of them even were taken in by false gold dust carefully confected of a small portion of silver filings, particles of glistening quartz, and limestone with coloring matter added. The *News* of March 1, 1862, reported the imitation dust was in circulation and cautioned the unwary and avaricious.

Busy minds also figured out ways to cheat the smelters on gold ore. These usually involved tampering with the assay sample upon which payment for the gross ore tonnage was based. Smelter assayers, frequently with the assistance of the miner bringing in the ore, would drop a small portion of the native ore into a bin to be tested. One enterprising miner discovered that while bending over the sampling bin he could dribble into it from his sleeve a small quantity of finely powered gold and thereby convert country rock into high-grade ore. He boasted following his arrest that he became so adept he could prearrange the assay value of his "ore" to the second decimal point.

Some of the early Denver bunco schemes were scarcely less imaginative than the tall tales and hoaxes which delighted nineteenth-century newspapers, including the *Rocky Mountain News*. Joseph E. Hood, who became an associate editor of the *News*, whipped up one which was republished throughout the country as a fabulous advance in geologic and geographic knowledge. Hood had been with Samuel Bowles' Springfield, Massachusetts, *Republican* before he came west with his Jules Verne fantasies.

With a perfectly straight face he told of an interview with a man who had made an underground voyage from the Great Salt Lake to southern Colorado. Salt Lake, he pointed out, has no known outlet. In southern Colorado there was a lake with no known inlet. The mystery of how this could be now was solved. Hood's voyager had been boating on Salt Lake and was caught in a whirlpool which bore him straight downward into the earth to a great underground river flowing in a tunnelliike cavern hung with varicolored stalactites of great beauty. The man's boat was whipped along this nether-world river for a distance of something over six hundred miles at breath-taking speed. Finally he shot upward and popped out on the surface of the Colorado lake. Hood, by virtue of the great and cost-scoring enterprise of the *News*, had obtained an exclusive interview.

S. T. Sopris, later night telegraph editor for the paper, said Hood's story "was copied from the *News* by many papers, East and West, and a goodly number of people swallowed it whole. It was the sensation of the day."⁶

⁶"Early Day Reminiscences," *Trail*, Vol. VII, No. 7 (Dec. 1914).

Everything was bigger and better in the Rockies. Even the mosquitoes. The *News* of August 27, 1859, told of a group of men who were traveling by stage through the pineries and saw in the distance what they supposed to be the frame of a log house under construction in a lonely glen. On approaching they found it was just the skeleton of a mosquito which had starved to death.

Such "news" helped keep the ads apart in a paper which had no telegraphic service. But as the *News* moved toward a daily edition a substitute for the talking wires was being fashioned out of horseflesh. In the spring months of 1860 the paper began to talk of news "by pony."

Looming large in the foreground of nearly everyone's image of the old West is the dashing figure of a small, wiry man on a galloping horse with saddlebags labeled, inaccurately, "U. S. Mail." The Pony Express was a glorious adventure which thrilled a nation. It also was a financial flop. During the eighteen months of its service from April 1860 to October 1861 the express lost \$200,000 on a \$700,000 operation, and it carried its sponsors, the freighting firm of Russell, Majors & Waddell, into bankruptcy. But the fleet ponies and their nerry riders fired the imagination, and Americans of 1860 shook their heads over a shrinking world. Eight days from the Missouri to San Francisco! "The race is to the swift!" the *Gazette* exulted in St. Joseph, starting point of the pony line. "We are eight days from New York, eighteen days from London!"

The Pony Express spanned half the continent, two thousand miles of prairie, mountain, and desert from St. Joe to Sacramento, with relay points ten to twenty miles apart. Mounts were changed at each station, riders at every third. The mail charge was five dollars for two ounces, and some Eastern newspapers published tissue-paper editions for dispatch by pony. The first run left St. Joseph at 4 P.M. on April 3, 1860, and reached San Francisco at 1 A.M., April 14, for an average speed of about ten miles an hour. The time was better than many railroads of the day maintained, and over a longer distance.

The audacious enterprise had been announced late in March with ads in the New York *Herald* and the Washington *Star*, the latter then owned by W. H. Russell of Russell, Majors & Waddell. Plans specified once-a-week service in each direction on schedules which called upon the riders to hold an average pace of eight miles an hour. Later in the summer this was advanced to twice-weekly service and the speed set at ten miles an hour, or eight days from the Missouri to Sacramento. The riders, sixty of them, were hand-picked for light weight, courage, and general fitness. Their assignment demanded that they ride about seventy-five miles with only two brief stops to switch horses, but sometimes they were required to double back and ride a second course without rest. Smiley records the feat of one pony rider who in an emergency covered 384 miles with time out only for hasty meals and mount changes.

Denver was off the main route of the Pony Express, which came up

the Platte, crossed the South Platte near Julesburg in northeastern Colorado, and then swung through Wyoming to cross the Continental Divide on the easier grade later followed by the Pacific Railroad. A branch line was established, however, between Denver and Julesburg over which lathered horses began to bring the *News* phenomenally "hot" dispatches only four or five days old. In the autumn of 1860 the *News* Printing Company contracted with the Pony Express for the regular delivery of telegraphic news from St. Joseph, 660 miles away as the ponies ran.

One of the first items of news "by pony" appeared in the paper dated May 30, 1860. It was datelined Chicago, and it brought a new name into prominence in Denver.

On the 18th inst. Hon. A. Lincoln of Illinois was nominated for president, received 354 votes, Seward on the same ballot receiving 110½ votes, Dayton one, McLean one-half. His nomination was received with immense applause, and guns were fired throughout the city.

A few weeks later, on June 27, the *News* still was amazed by the rapid communication of modern times. The headlines read:

LATEST NEWS
BY THE PONY EXPRESS!
FASTEST TIME ON RECORD!!
HURRA FOR THE PONY!!!

By the coach that arrived yesterday morning we received dispatches from our St. Joseph correspondent, to the morning of the 22d, forwarded by Pony Express to the South Platte crossing, and from there by the C. O. C. & P. P. Express Company's coach, reaching us in the unprecedented short time of four days and six hours. . . .

The dispatches didn't amount to much; the big news was the pony itself.

By November, when the nation went to the polls in one of the key elections of American history, the *News* was publishing daily and Pony Express news was highly important to the operation. When the express left St. Joseph on November 8 it carried a special envelope addressed to A. Benham Esq. in Julesburg for forwarding to the *Rocky Mountain News*. On the outside of the envelope someone wrote what it contained: "Election News. Lincoln Elected." The pony riders also shouted out the news like prairie Paul Reveres to passers-by along the trail. Albert Richardson had left the *News* staff a day or two earlier and was headed east to join the New York *Tribune*. He wrote that the first word he had of Lincoln's election came in the middle of the night as his coach rocked

eastward. A Pony Expressman rode past in the opposite direction and sang out the word to the coach passengers.

The important envelope arrived in Denver four days after it left the end of the telegraph wires on the Missouri, and the *News* published the details of Lincoln's victory in an extra on November 12. The story was pirated immediately by the *Herald*, with which the *News* still was feuding bitterly and interminably. The theft was denounced with some vigor in the *News* for November 14:

We have in our day seen many newspapers of all kinds of principles, and of no principles at all, but never have we known one, no matter how low its pretensions or groveling its nature, that was conducted with such utter disregard of truth, honesty and common decency as the *Rocky Mountain Herald* of this city.

Monday morning it pretends to publish election returns "by Pony Express especially for the *Herald*"—a statement as false as the general principles of that foul, dirty sheet. It never received ANY dispatches by Pony, but steals them from the *News* and palms them off upon its readers as legitimately belonging to itself.

As the divided nation moved closer and closer to war Lincoln's inaugural message was awaited, east and west as well as north and south, with anxiety and intense interest. Except for the fragile line of pony relays, California's news was twenty-one days coming by steamship via Panama, and the new territory of Colorado was scarcely less isolated. Yet both wanted to know at the earliest possible moment what the lanky new President would say. The Pony Express made special arrangements to speed the news. Relay points were moved closer together. Time allotted for change-overs was cut. When the message came on March 4 (" . . . there needs to be no bloodshed or violence, and there shall be none unless it be forced upon the national authority . . ."), the words were sped from St. Joseph to Sacramento in seven days and seventeen hours, and to Denver in two days and twenty-one hours. The pony making the final run into Denver with dispatches for the *News* covered ten miles in thirty-one minutes. (The full text of Lincoln's message came more slowly by coach. The *News* published some three columns of it on March 11 and ended abruptly with: "[Here the coach came along, and the report was stopped.]")

Despite its heroic swiftness, the system of tough little men and fast horses was doomed. Congress had passed an act providing for the Pacific Telegraph, and the wires were inching westward from Omaha. By April they had reached Fort Kearney in western Nebraska, and in October the eastward- and westward-advancing lines would meet at Salt Lake City. Until then the Pony Express filled in the steadily diminishing gap. When the express at last gave way to a completed strand of wire the *News* established its own pony relays to bring news from the telegraph

offices in, first, Fort Kearney and then Julesburg. At what must have been ruinous expense for the times the paper maintained its private express for another two years until a branch telegraph line was strung into Denver from Julesburg. Both the *News* and the *Herald* also maintained pony express lines to Black Hawk, Central City, Nevada, and Missouri City, towns which had come into being in and about the Gregory Diggings. The papers had offices in Central, and there was brisk competition to see who could get there first with the latest edition. The racing ponies pounded into the mountain towns with papers only three to four hours off the presses, and this was regarded as high journalistic enterprise in 1861.

Dispatches received by the *News* via combined telegraph and pony express were brief and undetailed. Although "Reported from the Associated Press" appears for the first time December 10, 1860, the great national and international news-gathering agencies of the present day were unknown. Special correspondents had to be hired to forward telegraphic news borrowed freely from distant newspapers and other sources. Remote editors like Byers begged, copied, or stole their national and overseas news, and were grateful for what they could get.

Speed of news handling was stepped up when the telegraph line finally got to Denver in September of 1863. The city, pushed along by *News* editorials, subscribed thirty-five thousand dollars to string the wire down from Julesburg. But when the civic dignitaries gathered in a little office over the Warren Hussey & Company bank at Fifteenth and Market streets on October 1 to dispatch the historic first message, the key was dead. A storm had severed the line even before it could be placed in operation. Ten days later repairs had been completed, and Mayor Amos Steck exchanged congratulatory messages with the mayor of Omaha. Denver at last was in communication with the outside world at a pace faster than a horse's. For another decade or more, however, the linkage with civilization would be a tenuous one. Indians would tear down the wires for ornaments, or war parties would cut them to hamper cavalry pursuit. Trigger-happy cowboys would use the insulators to sharpen their aim. And the great, shaggy buffalo used the poles as scratching posts. A big bull luxuriously massaging his tough hide could easily topple a pole, and as it went down the brittle iron wire would snap. Denver again was plunged back into isolation, and the *News* would have to apologize to its readers because "the line is down somewhere east." No news today.

Telegraph tolls were high—nearly a dollar a word to New York—and news was skeletonized to the barest minimum. Fifty or a hundred words would come in, virtually in code, and it was the task of the *News* telegraph editor, a post of new and shining eminence, to expand this into more extensive reports in approximate English. S. T. Sopris, who held the job in the sixties, recalled that he "had to keep well informed as to names of places, generals, rivers and the like, in order to give the readers

a clear understanding of what was going on. . . . Every page of the reports was a 'missing word' contest and a producer of headaches." The night telegraph editor had other difficulties too. Sopris described them thus:

. . . The last report for the day reached the Denver office about midnight, and it was part of my day's work to walk down there, wait for "30" and then hike back to the office. There were no street lamps and for much of the way wooden "awnings", mere sheds they were, extended the full width of the sidewalk, intensifying, if possible, the Cimmerian darkness usual at that hour. At and around the north corner of Larimer and Fifteenth streets were a cluster of Grocery stores: Davis & Clarke, L. D. Reithmann, Isaac Underwood and Mitchell & Sons.

Along about 10 o'clock P.M. Johnnie Murphy's cows would meander down from Curtis street to forage along the fronts of the grocery shops for such stray cabbage leaves, potatoes and other vegetables as might have been left outside after closing time. Having made a clean-up, the blamed cows would lie down on the sidewalk, to await the coming of "Aurora, the goddess of morn, with rosy fingers dripping gentle dews," and then hie themselves homeward. After sprawling over a few of them, I adopted the plan of taking to the middle of the street, greatly to the relief of the cows, who seemed to object to my intrusions upon their privacy. . . .

The active Byers, of course, was not content merely to be a passive recipient of news dispatches by wire. He had to get into the game itself. He was one of the organizers in 1866 of the United States & Mexico Telegraph Company, a director and vice-president of the firm. He surveyed and personally supervised construction of the first telegraph line south from Denver to New Mexico, completed in 1868. His diary for March of that year tells of setting poles through a storm which left three feet of snow on the ground.

With the completion of the original line in 1863, his newspaper began to take form which would be recognizable by present-day readers of the daily press. The *News* was no longer exclusively an insular recorder of boar fights in the street or saloon rumpuses. The pulse of the world, however attenuated by high telegraph tolls, was beginning to flow in its veins. Fire, flood, and Confederate raiders still had to be contended with, and wild Indians yet would be troublesome to press and city, but modern times were arriving.

CHAPTER NINE

Fire, Flood, and Recognition

DENVER in the early 1860s was a tinderbox town waiting for a spark. Most of the flimsy buildings which clustered around the Larimer, McGaa (Market), and Blake street crossings of the creek were built of logs or rough, unmilled clapboards sawed from pitch-filled native pine. Wooden awnings, arcades, and balconies extended over plank sidewalks where loose or missing boards were traps for the unwary of foot. A few of the "business blocks" towered to two stories. A lot more pretended to such architectural glory with false fronts. In the commercial district the structures stood cheek by jowl without room for a yellow cat to squeeze between them. Most of the homes still were log cabins. A few were frame, and some of these were prettied up with wooden fretwork lace at the eaves. As gestures to gentility the interior walls and ceilings of more pretentious homes often were hung with cheesecloth or sheeting in lieu of wallpaper. Roofs were of wooden shingles or rough-split shakes. Nearly everything was inflammable.

And the pioneers, whatever other virtues they possessed of close husbandry and vigilance, were careless with fire. They had casually burned off the forests around the Gregory Diggings. Their campfires were left to smolder for days or weeks. They set prairie fires, stored powder in wooden shanties, and, as has been related, tried to burn down the offices of offensive newspapermen.

With a population of cheerful arsonists and a ready supply of fuel, an incendiary future might have been predicted.

The Byers family had an advance sample, very nearly disastrous, of what was in store for the city. Their house burned down on the evening of October 12, 1860. They had moved in June from the two rooms at the rear of the printing office to a frame house luxuriously lined with muslin. The flames can be imagined. Mrs. Byers and the older children, Frank and Mollie, got out safely, but the baby, born earlier that year, had to be grabbed from a blazing crib. The infant survived the close brush only to die a few months later of natural causes. (The Byerses had four children, two of whom lived to adulthood.) Neighbors and printers from the office pitched in to fight the fire, but the house was a total loss. Elizabeth Byers wrote that she lost "all my pretty homelike things," and the family had to start over again with only the few household

items saved from the flames. A card of thanks was published in the *News*, expressing gratitude to "those neighbors and citizens, who so kindly and promptly lent the aid of their hands last night" and voicing "the wish that they may never be like sufferers."

On July 15, 1862, an uneasy City Council finally decided to remedy the total lack of fire-fighting facilities. A resolution was adopted providing for the organizing and equipping of a volunteer hook-and-ladder company and two bucket brigades. But the cart and buckets still were on order and the fire department only on paper when the night of April 19, 1863, arrived.

The spring had been a dry one, and high winds had lashed plains and town. One was blowing in fitful, compass-boxing gusts between 2 and 3 A.M. on April 19 when flames burst through the roof at the rear of the Cherokee House on the southwest corner of Fifteenth and Blake streets, less than three blocks away from the *News* office. The shifting wind spread the fire in all directions, hurling it across streets and from roof to roof of the dry, resinous buildings. Every man in town was called out as a fire fighter. Buildings were torn down to halt spread of the fire, but two or three hours later at dawn the heart of the city was a black, smoking waste. Heaps of char marked the locations of many of the most substantial businesses. The total loss was estimated at three hundred and fifty thousand dollars, a stiff blow for a four-year-old town.

The *News* itself, perched on its stilts in Cherry Creek, escaped the flames, although the trickle of a stream would have interposed no barrier had the chances of the wind's turning been otherwise. But the paper had lost some of its best advertisers and customers: Broadwell & Cook, the Cherokee House, W. S. Cheesman, the City Bakery, Daniels & Brown, Tritch Hardware, the Elephant Corral, Nye & Co. Prices of provisions doubled within a few days, and times were lean until new ox trains of supplies came through.

Rebuilding started almost immediately, however, and the fire proved a bonanza for small boys. They poked about in the charred ruins and picked up nails. The *News* of May 7 said some of them were finding a hundred to two hundred pounds a day and netting five to ten dollars for their efforts. The secondhand nails went into the new buildings, but the construction was different. Denver rebuilt largely with brick, and the "Great Fire of '63" became the dividing line between architectural eras.

The *News* lived through Denver's first major disaster with only secondary damages, but it would not be twice lucky. The paper would pay a total penalty for disregarding nature's laws and an Indian's warning.

Cherry Creek carried so little water, even during the spring runoff, that the town straddling it came to regard it as a dry stream. Originally the small flowing rivulet wandered amiably down a bed of white sand one hundred yards or more in width. The bottoms of fine sand and

occasional seeps were only an annoyance; heavy wagons would now and then get stuck in them. So they were bridged, after a fashion, at several busy points. Dikes were graded out from the slightly higher ground on either bank to carry roadways to short bridges just high enough to let spring waters pass beneath. Then the town itself crowded in on both sides with City Hall, Methodist Church, printing office, banks, saloons, and homes. It is not clear why the pioneers went to the added expense of putting down pilings to get firm foundations when good, flat town lots were available for a few dollars or a horse, but they did. It is also not clear why some of them, nature-wise as pioneers are supposed to be, did not read in the white, clean-washed sands of the channel testimony of occasional high water. But they didn't.

As they rebuilt after the fire they encroached farther and farther into the stream bed. The *News* already had taken its position there and was merrily turning out its daily and weekly editions with exclamatory promises that soon it would be forced to print "800 copies!" every day. Bliss and Rounds retired from the *News* Printing Company in 1863, and now it was once more "Byers & Dailey, props."

The *News* appears to have had a premonition that its "neutral ground" position may have been a wise political move in the intracity squabbles but that topography might be no respecter of the subtle arts of diplomacy. Back in 1860 there had been a heavy rain to the southeast and the creek had risen moderately. Byers commented on August 1: "Cherry Creek appears to present a rather serious problem, for we have had a demonstration of what may be expected from a heavy rainfall on the Divide, though we are not yet inclined to believe the Indian claims that the whole settlement is subject to flood." (The editor was not referring to the Continental Divide in the mountains; "the Divide" to the early settlers was the high ground at the headwaters of Cherry Creek which separates the drainage basins of the South Platte and Arkansas rivers.)

Some time later, with rueful afterthought, Byers would recall what a deep-lined old Arapaho had said as he watched the town building. He didn't understand, the patriarch told the young editor, why the white men were building their village in the creek bottom. That was where the floods came down. He and his people had seen "big water" to a depth, "so," and he held his hands high above his head. Plainsmen and mountaineers also had warned of a prairie phenomenon later to be known as a "flash flood," but then of course everyone knew those old gaffers as yarn spinners of rare ability.

The flood hit a year, a month and a day after the fire.

During the week before May 19, 1864, there had been heavy rains over the headwaters of Cherry Creek, soaking the high plains to saturation. Wild, black thunderheads hung over the area. A pleasant shower laid the dust in Denver on May 19, but a rainbow appeared at dusk, and after

dark the moon shone brightly. The creek had risen some, but the town paid it no mind and went to bed contentedly.

Suddenly, sometime after midnight, the placid little brook changed its disposition.

For an account of what happened that night there is no more inspired a witness than Professor O. J. Goldrick, journalist, pedagogue, and stylist. His lyric essay on the memorable flood has become the most famous news article in the annals of Denver journalism. It deserves full reproduction here. The headline went: "Sketch of the Great Deluge in Denver."

About the midnight hour of Thursday, the nineteenth instant, when almost all in town were knotted in the peace of sleep, deaf to all noise and blind to all danger, snoring in calm security, and seeing visions of remoteness radiant with the rainbow hues of past associations, or roscate with the gilded hopes of the fanciful future—while the full-faced queen of night shed showers of fertility, garnishing and suffusing sleeping nature with her balmy brightness, fringing the feathery cottonwoods with lustre, enameling the housetops with coats of pearl, bridging the erst placid Platte with beams of radiance, and bathing the arid sands of Cherry creek with dewy beauty—a frightful phenomenon sounded in the distance, and a shocking calamity presently charged upon us. The few who had not retired to bed, broke from their buildings to see what was coming. Hark! what and where is this? A torrent or a tornado? And where can it be coming from, and whither going? These were the questions soliloquized and spoken, one to the other. Has creation's God forsaken us, and has chaos come again? Our eyes might bewilder and our ears deceive, but our hearts, all trembling, and our sacred souls soon whispered what it was—the thunders of omnipotence warning us "there's danger on the wing," with death himself seeming to prompt our preparation for the terrible alternative of destruction or defence; Presently the great noise of mighty waters, like the roaring of Niagara, or the rumbling of an enraged Etna, burst upon us, distinctly and regularly in its sounding steps as the approach of a tremendous train of locomotives. There was soon a hurrying to and fro in terror, trying to wake up one's relatives and neighbors, while some favored few who were already dressed, darted out of doors, and clamorously called their friends to climb the adjacent bluffs and see with certainty for themselves. Alas, and wonderful to behold! it was the water engine of death dragging its destroying train of maddened waves, that defied the eye to number them, which was rushing down upon us, now following its former channel, and now tunneling direct through banks and bottoms a new channel of its own. Alarm flew around, and all alike were ignorant of what to think, or say, or do, much less of knowing where to go with safety, or to save others. A thousand thoughts flitted o'er us, and a thousand terrors thrilled us through. What does this mean? where has this tremendous flood or freshet, this terrific torrent come from? Has the Platte switched off from its time-worn trace and turned its treasure down to deluge us? Have the wild waterspouts from all the clouds at

once conspired to drain their upper cisterns, and thus drench us here in death? Have the firm foundations of the great deep burst forth on fallen men, regardless of that rainbow covenant which spanned in splendor yon arc of sky last evening? Is the world coming to an end, or special wreck of matter impending? These, and thoughts like these, troubled the most fearless souls.

Its Progress of Destruction.

Now the torrent, swelled and thickened, showed itself in sight, sweeping tremendous trees and dwelling houses before it—a mighty volume of impetuous water, wall-like in its advancing front, as was the old Red Sea when the Israelites walked through it and volcano-like in its floods of foaming, living lava, as it rolled with maddened momentum directly towards the Larimer street bridge and gorged, afterwards rebounding with impetuous rage and striking the large Methodist church and the adjoining buildings, all of which it wrested from their foundations and engulfed in the yawn of bellowing billows as they broke over the McGaa street bridge. Like death, leveling all things in its march, the now overwhelming flood upheaved the bridge and the two buildings by it, Messrs. Charles & Hunt's law offices, in the latter of which C. Bruce Haynes was sleeping, whom, with the velocity of a cataract, it launched asleep and naked on the watery ocean of eternity, to find his final, fatal refuge only in the flood-gate port of death! Poor Haynes! Your summons came, but 'twas short and sudden, after and not before you had "wrapped the drapery" of your humble couch about you, and had lain down to "pleasant dreams." Precipitately and in paroxysms the tempestuous torrent swept along, now twenty feet in the channel's bed, and bridging bank to bank with billows high as hills piled upon hills—with broken buildings, tables, bedsteads, baggage, boulders, mammoth trees, leviathan logs and human beings buffeted with the billowcrests, and beckoning us to save them. But there we stood, and there the new made banks and distant bluffs were dotted with men and families, but poorly and partly dressed, deploring with dumb amazement the catastrophe in sight. The waters like a pall were spreading over all the inhabited lower parts of town and townsite. Nature shook about us. The azure meads of heaven were darkened as in death, and the fair Diana with her starry train, though defended by the majesty of darkness all around her, and by batteries of thick clouds in front, looked down on shuddering silence dimly, as if lost in the labyrinth of wonder and amazement at the volume and vast abyss into which we all expected to be overwhelmed. Next reeled the dear old office of the *Rocky Mountain News*, that pioneer of hardship and of honor, which here nobly braved the battle and the breeze for five full years and a month, regularly without intermission or intimidation, and down it sank, with its union flag staff, into the maelstrom of the surging waters, soon to appear and disappear, between the waves, as, wild with starts, in mountains high, they rose and rolled, as if endeavoring to form a dread alliance with the clouds, and thus consummate our general wreck.

Before this a few moments, one of the proprietors, Mr. J. L. Dailey, and four of the young gentlemen employees, who had been asleep in the building, awoke to realize the peril of their critical situation, and without time to save anything at all in the whole establishment, not even their trunks at their bedsides, or watches on the table-stands, they fortunately escaped, by jumping out of a side window, down into the eddy water caused by a drift which had formed against the building, and thence by the aid of ropes and swimming, struck the shore, on the instant of time to see the sorrowful sight of their building, stock, material, money, all, even to the lot on which it stood (for which all \$12,000 would have been refused a few hours previously), uptorn, and yet scattered to the four winds of heaven, or sunk, shattered in sand banks between here and the States.

Higher, broader, deeper, and swifter boiled the waves of water, as the mass of flood, freighted with treasure, trees and live stock, leaped towards the Blake street bridge, prancing with the violence of a fiery steed stark mad:

"Fierce as ten furies, terrible as hell."

Great God! and are we all "gone up," and is there no power to stem the tide was asked all round. But no; as if that nature demanded it, or there was need of the severe lesson it teacheth to the citizens of town, the waves dashed higher still, and the volume of water kept on eroding bluffs and bank, and undermining all the stone and foundations in its rapid course.

The inundation of the Nile, the Noachian deluge, and that of Prometheus' son, Deucalien, the Noah of the Greeks, were now in danger of being out-deluged by this great phenomenon of '64.

Oh! it was indescribably and inconceivably awful to behold that spectacle of terrible grandeur, as the moon would occasionally shed her rays on the surges of the muddy waves, whose angry thundering drowned all other noise, and to hear the swooping of the death angel as he flew o'er the troubled surface, suggesting the idea of death and destruction in the wild tumults of the torrent!

Previous to this had gone towards the ocean-like delta of the creek and Platte, the Blake street bridge, General Bowen's law office, Metz's saddlery shop, F. A. Clark's and Mr. McKee's stores, the City Hall buildings and jail, together with Cass & Co.'s old Bank, Stickney's brick, and Tilton & Co.'s adjoining brick emporium, all with a crash and speedy disappearance in the current stateward bound, and with not a few people as passengers aboard. Now we see a youth, white with wan despair, and a child stiff in the cramps of death, popping his head up stories high on the river's surface, only to be struck senseless by an overtaking tree or solid sheet of water, thereafter thence, when the roaring of the raging elements, exemplification of the Almighty's voice and power, will tell their only funeral knell as calamity's sad corpse on sorrow's hearse is carried to its watery grave, with a watery winding-

sheet and melancholy moonlight for its shroud! Verily, "the Lord giveth and taketh away," yet "shall mortal man be more just than his maker?"

More About the Freshet.

For about five hours, up to daylight, the floods in Cherry creek and in the Platte were growing gradually, spreading over West Denver and the Platte bottoms in the eastern and western wards of town, divided by Cherry creek, and bounded westerly by the then booming Platte. For squares up Cherry creek, on either side of its old channel, and along to its entrance into the Platte, the adjoining flats were inundated, and the buildings thereon made uncomfortable if not unsafe by the amount of water carpeting their floors to a depth of from one to five feet deep. Blake street was covered to a foot in depth in water with mire, and the basements of many of its stores were solid cisterns of muddy water. From the Buffalo House to the site of F street bridge, on the East Denver flats, was one shining sea of water. Most of the settlers had to leave their homes and household goods, and made up town to escape the inundation. The same was the case with the majority of the citizens on the west side also. There it was still deeper and more dangerous, and there, too, it proved more destructive to the residents and residences.

Scores and scores of the families from Camp Weld, along down to the foot of Ferry street and thence southwesterly to the old site of Chubbuck's bridge, were surprised in their sleep, and surrounded by an oceanic expanse of water from the overflowing Platte. Many found their floors flooded from three to six feet deep with water before they knew it, or had waking warning to escape for their lives, and gladly leave the frame structures and their furniture and fixtures to float down with the flood. 'Twas here that the most severe and serious losses and privations were encountered. 'Twas here, West Denver, along Front street, Fifth street, Cherry street, and Ferry, as well as all over the streets of the southwestern bottoms, that the gallant officers and men of the Colorado First, together with several of the citizens, showed their timely presence and their truly great assistance, rescuing families from their flooded homes, and removing them on horseback and otherwise, to distant dwellings high and dry.

During this time, which lasted a few hours, commencing about daylight's dawn, the scenes of sorrow and of suffering should have been seen to be appreciated, to draw forth due gratitude to the rescuers for the self-sacrifice they showed. Many of the families, women and children, had to flee in their sleeping habiliments, having neither time nor inclination to squander in search of their "good clothes." Thanks and remembrances eternal to all of those active, noble souls on the several sides of town who worked from the noon of night to next noonday assisting the sufferers and aiding the citizens in all good efforts and good works.

'Twas not till daylight that the chocked up Cherry creek completely

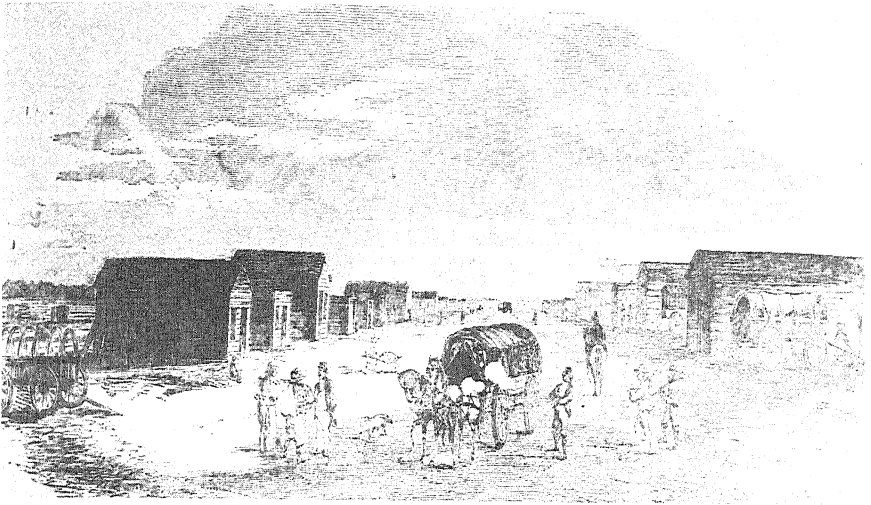
spread itself and formed independent confederations, one stream running down Front street, deep and impetuous enough to launch a good-sized building from its foundations; another down Cherry street, conclusively gutting the street and blockading the dwellings' doors with "wood and water" up almost to their very lintels. On Ferry a lively river flowed, five or more feet deep, with a current strong enough to make a Hudson river steamer hop along its waves. The Ferry street and F street bridges fell early in the flood, and the erosions in the estuary at the latter entirely changed the river's bed, forming a new cycloidal channel nearly an eighth of a mile to the westward. The same freaks were exhibited by Cherry creek during its twelve hour lunacy, leaving the old time bed, and breaking another farther north, by undermining the bluffs, and excavating and upheaving old alluvial mounds without ceremony. Now this celebrated creek resembles a respectable river, with a prospect of a perpetual, flowing stream throughout the year, instead of selfishly sinking in the sands some miles above, as heretofore. Its having defined its position and established its base for future operations, will prove a good thing to the town eventually, notwithstanding it falls heavily on hundreds for the present.

Origin of the Flood.

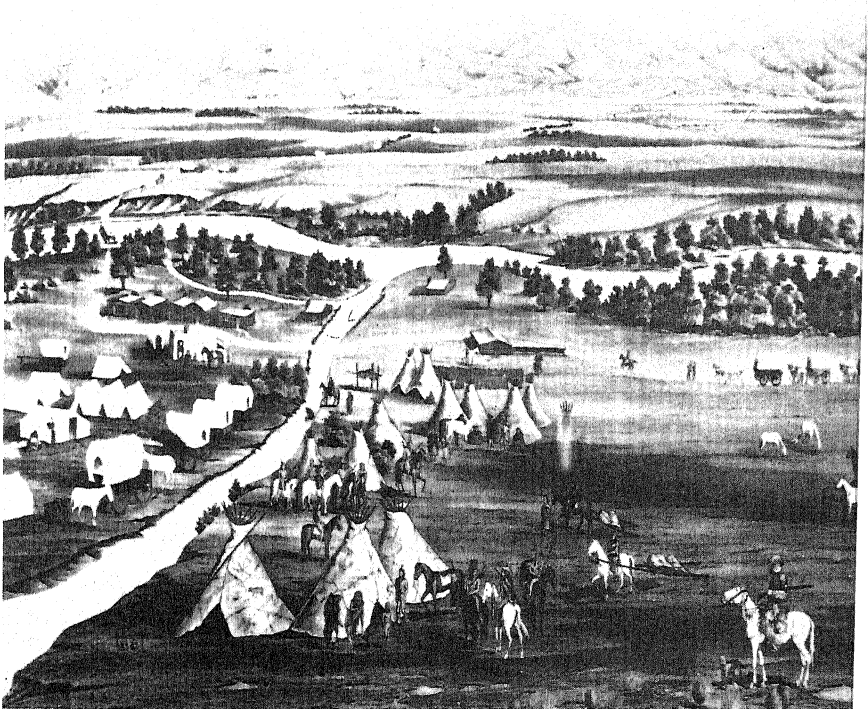
For a few days previous, there was an abnormal amount of rain at the heads of Cherry creek and Plum creek, along the water-shed range of the divide, so much so that it terrified tillers of the soil, and threatened their cultivated fields with failure. On Thursday afternoon it rained there incessantly, so that the natives knew not whether the cistern clouds had lost their bottoms, or had burst asunder altogether. It would shower hail-stones as large as hen's eggs one hour, and during the next hour it would literally pour down waterspout sheets of rain from reservoirs not over two hundred feet above, while a few minutes more would wash the hail away, and leave four feet of water on the level fields. And this ponderous downpouring was so terrible that it instantly inundated and killed several thousand sheep and some cattle that were corralled at ranches in that region. This phenomenon will plausibly prepare us to believe that the "dry cimarron" beyond Bent's Fort, the Ocate, the Pecos, and large but partially dry *arroyos* of New Mexico were formerly what the "exaggerating" mountaineers have heretofore assured our infidel minds were but stubborn matters of facts. Even at this present writing, and in our own immediate neighborhood, it will not be believed what startling changes have been made by the alluvial developments of last Friday, unless you have your auditors accompany you to the theatre of the tempestuous flood, on Cherry creek and elsewhere, so that seeing becomes believing.

Items and Incidents.

The spirit of departed day had joined communion with the myriad ghosts of centuries, and four full hours fled into eternity before the citizens of many parts of town found out there was a freshet here at all!



Denver in 1859. A wood engraving of Larimer Street, looking northeastward from Cherry Creek, as pictured by an artist for *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper*, Aug. 20, 1859.

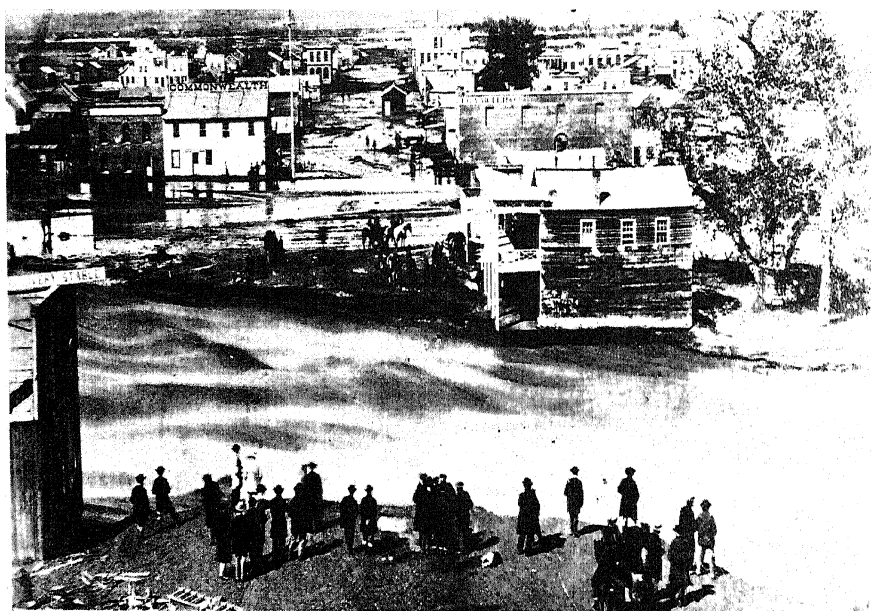


Auraria, left, and Denver City, right, in 1859. From a painting by an unknown hand in the Western Collection, Denver Public Library. Cherry Creek at left. South Platte



Collection of Fred M. Mazzulla

Before the flood. A photo from the early 1860s showing the *News* office built on stilts in the bed of Cherry Creek. The deluge of May 20, 1864, swept it away.



Western Collection, Denver Public Library

Auraria viewed across Cherry Creek from Denver City on the morning after the memorable flood of '64. At upper left is the printing office of the *Commonwealth*,



Western Collection, Denver Public Library

O pioneers! The *News* moved into this log cabin in Auraria in December 1859. Photo was taken shortly before it was dismantled in 1900. The cabin also saw duty as jail, guardhouse, and stable.



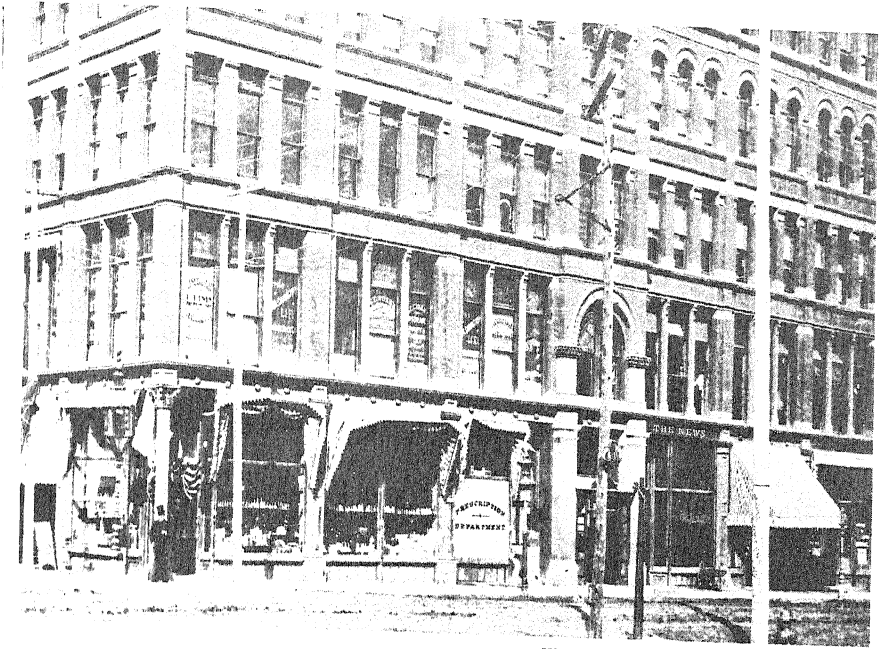
William Peery

A night view of the present *Rocky Mountain News* building, occupied in 1952.



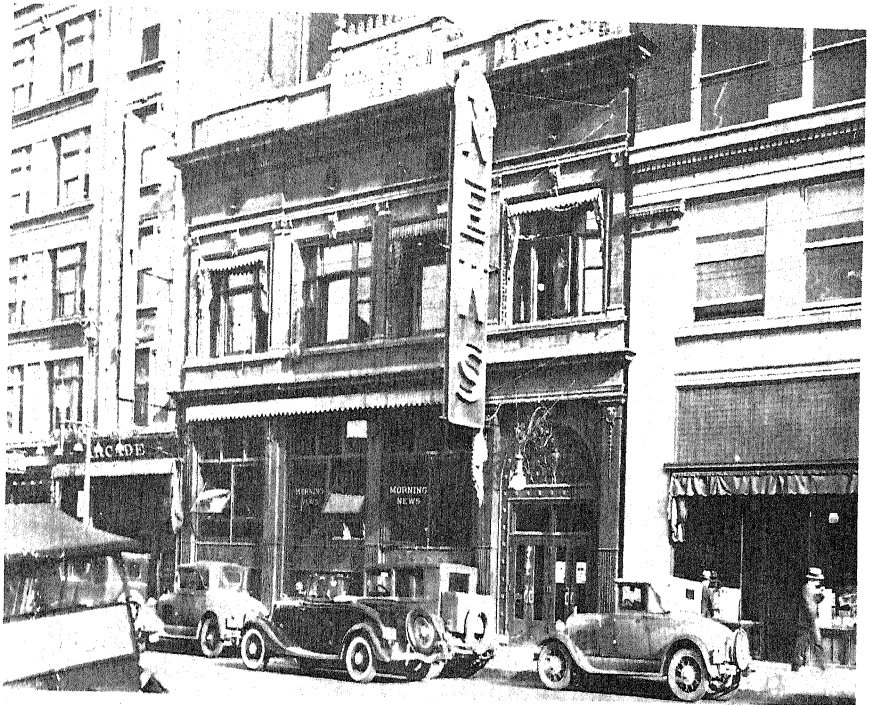
Western Collection, Denver Public Library

The News office when it occupied the ground floor of the Markham Hotel, 17th and Lawrence streets, 1897-1901. Horse-and-wagon delivery.

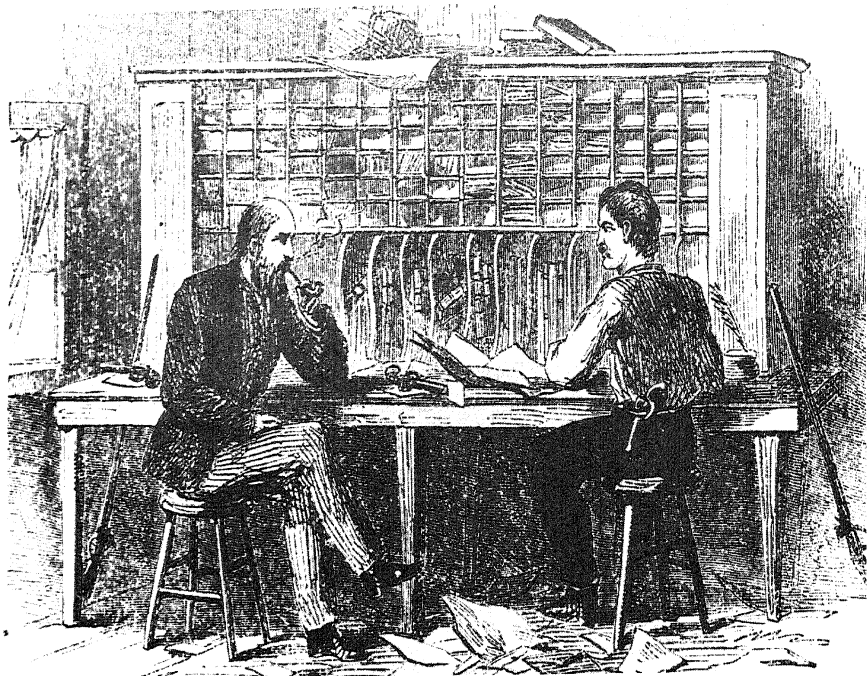


Western Collection, Denver Public Library

(Above) The Patterson & Thomas Block, later the Quincy Building, at 17th and Curtis streets, home of the *News* from 1887 to 1897. *News* office can be seen faintly at right of main entrance. Site is now a parking lot. (Below) The *News* building at 1720 Welton Street, 1901 to 1952. The site is now a parking lot.

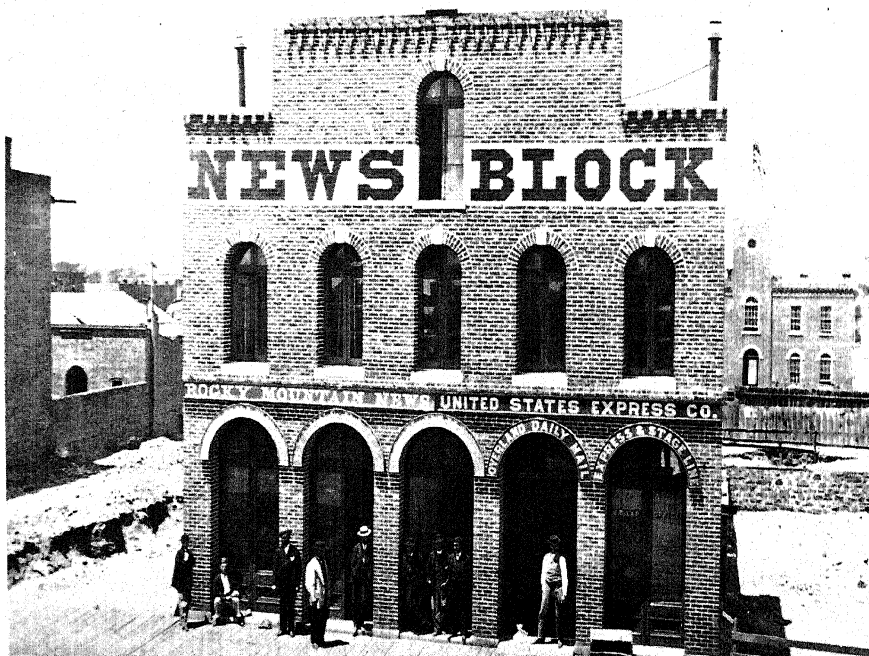


Harry M. Rhoads



Western Collection, Denver Public Library

(Above) Editorial room of the *News* as seen by an artist for *Beadle's Monthly*, June 1866. Note the armaments. (Below) The *News* shared its proud "brick block" with the stage-coach office. Building was completed in 1866. It stood at 389 (now 1547) Larimer Street.



Western Collection, Denver Public Library



Western Collection, Denver Public Library

At home with the editor's family, 1862. Byers, his wife and children on their Platte River ranch at Denver's outskirts. They were rescued by boat from this house in the flood of 1864.

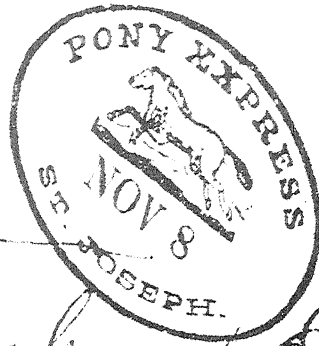


The *News*' birthplace: "Uncle Dick" Wootton's saloon and store in pioneer Auraria, 1859. The first edition came out of the attic. The Wootton building as conceived by an artist for *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper*, Aug. 20, 1859.



A voluntary retraction. Postmaster McClure persuades Professor O. J. Goldrick, early *News* reporter, to revise his dispatches. From Albert D. Richardson's *Beyond the Mississippi*.

Election News.
Lincoln Elected-



Benham Eq
Messburg
for the Rocky Mountain News
Denver.

Word of Lincoln's election reached the *News* via Pony Express.



Argonaut on the rocks.
A woodcut illustration
from Albert D.
Richardson's *Beyond
the Mississippi*, 1867.



Pike's Peaker in full regalia. This crude woodcut was the first illustration to appear in the *News*.

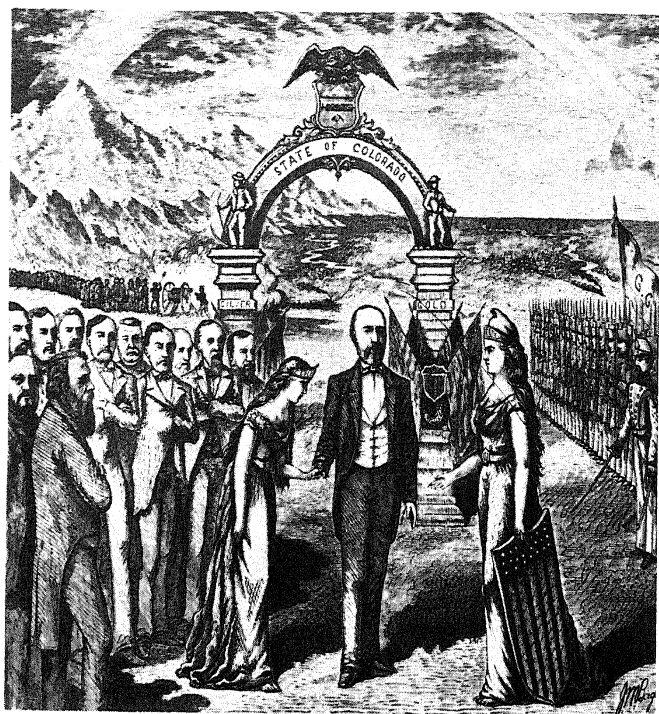


Western Collection, Denver Public Library

Armed neutrality. The *News* office about the time of the editor's kidnapping, as depicted in Albert D. Richardson's *Beyond the Mississippi*. The bearded scrivener at right presumably represents Edward Bliss.



Manifest Destiny in action. An early promotion piece for the *News*.



Western History Collection, Denver Public Library

A long-continued *Rocky Mountain News* campaign finally pays off: Statehood for Colorado, 1876. Jerome B. Chaffee, territorial delegate to Congress, presents the maiden Miss Colorado to Columbia. In the group of Colorado leaders at left, Editor Byers is the dark-bearded one whose head appears immediately to the left of Miss Colorado. Profile of John Evans, second territorial governor, at left foreground. Governor's Guard at right. From a contemporary newspaper drawing.

PRICE FIFTY CENTS.



One of the causes of the commotion. Title page from the rare Pike's Peak guidebook issued by Byers in the winter of 1859. Reproduced from the facsimile edited by Nolie Mumey and LeRoy R. Hafen.



Rocky Mountain News

A Scripps-Howard Newspaper

100TH YEAR, NO. 174

Published every morning by Denver Publishing Co.
Entered as second class matter, postage paid.

Colorado's First Newspaper—Founded in 1859

DENVER 1, COLO., MONDAY, OCT. 13, 1958

HOME

FINAL

★★★★

WIRECAST.

PRICE 5 CENTS

76 PAGES

ROCKET DIVES BACK TO EARTH



Cherry Hills Mother Saves Baby

—STORY ON PAGE 5

Heidi Ann Henkel smiles in play after her narrow scrape with death Sunday. The 8-month-old infant tumbled into a fish pond in the rear yard of her home at 4500 S. Lafayette, Cherry Hills, and was rescued by her mother, Mrs. Denny

Henkel. Mrs. Henkel saved the tot's life by applying artificial respiration she learned in a first aid class. Beau, the family French poodle and Heidi Ann's playmate, takes it easy after the harrowing experience.

—Rocky Mountain News Photo by Bob Talkin

79,120 Mi. Altitude Reached by Pioneer; End Is Blaze of Glory

Compiled from UPI and AP Dispatches

WASHINGTON, Oct. 12—Pioneer, America's moon rocket, plunged back to earth at about 9 p.m. Denver time Sunday and disintegrated in a blaze of glory.

After soaring 79,120 miles into outer space—farther than any man-made object ever has gone before—the Pioneer lost its thrust at 5:42 a.m. Denver time Sunday and began hurtling back to earth.

The Air Force said it is assumed the missile burned up upon re-entering the earth's atmosphere at a point estimated to be over the South Pacific Ocean.

No reports of visual observation of re-entry were received.

Tracking Station Loses Contact

The Air Force issued an announcement that said:

"The Hawaiian tracking station lost contact with the U.S. Pioneer lunar probe vehicle at 11:46 p.m. EDT (8:46 p.m. Denver time).

"It was the last tracking station in the lunar probe tracking and communications network to receive signals.

"Analysis of the data received by the Hawaiian station indicates that the Pioneer re-entered the earth's atmosphere at approximately midnight (9 p.m. Denver time) and is assumed to have burned up upon re-entry.

"The re-entry point was estimated to be over the South Pacific, latitude about 20 degrees south, longitude about 106 degrees west."

During the last two hours of the historic flight, the Air Force said repeated efforts were made to fire the retro rocket on Pioneer, but no confirmation of successful firing was received.

Attempt at Orbit of Earth

Attempts to fire the retro or terminal rocket in the nose of the satellite's payload were made in an effort to divert the Pioneer into orbit around the earth.

The final velocity was estimated at 34,425 feet per second, the same speed attained shortly after liftoff at Cape Canaveral, Fla., early Saturday.

In New York, President Eisenhower congratulated all those responsible for launching Pioneer into space.

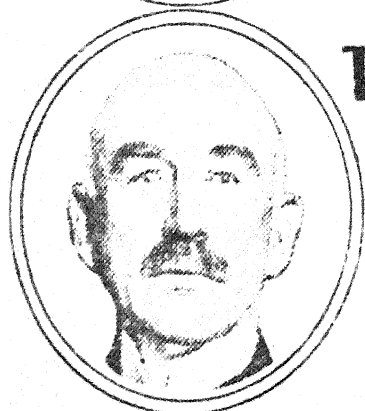
"Already it is clear," the President said, "that it will yield knowledge of great benefit to mankind." He added that this flight is a tremendous achievement which has "truly pioneered in deep penetration into outer space."

(Continued on Page 2)

BRASS-KNUCK BONFILS JUST EATS 'EM ALIVE



**SENATOR THOS. M.
PATTERSON,**
SLUGGED FROM BEHIND
ON A VACANT LOT IN
BROAD DAYLIGHT



THOS. J. O'DONNELL,
AMBUSHED AND
SLUGGED IN DENVER
COURTHOUSE IN
BROAD DAYLIGHT



THIS BLANK SPACE
MAY BE FILLED
WITH SOMEBODY'S
PICTURE SOON;
YOURS?

The war with the *Post* gets personal with fists. A clipping from the *News* of 1914 makes capital of Fred Bonfils' attack on Senator Patterson.

Whether it was caused by "deep sleep falling upon men," or by the concentrated essence of constitutional laziness, there were many made aware of the awful risk they ran by sleeping sluggard-like, after frequent rousings, not only later than the hour of dying twilight after the advent of the goddess of the morning, but even after Sol's bright beams had dispelled the dark and shown the awful escapes that all had run from the delugic danger. Some sons of men and women will not be made to move unless folks, Gabriel-like, will blow a trumpet through and through their ears, bedress them in their beds, and bewilder them into the belief that an ocean of old rectified poison will encircle them if they don't start!

To show how prolific they are of prophets, it is only necessary to cite the hundredth part of the number of those people who volunteered to inform the public the day after the flood, that they had prognosticated a few days previously, every particle of the things that happened; full well knowing, as they generously informed us, that there was a freshet coming just about the time it did! Prophetic souls, how envious you do make us, and how fortunate you were in not building your new houses "on the sand!" Were it not that knowing this aforetime, you probably have pre-empted them ahead of us, we would immediately take up a mill site and go ground-sluicing on the creek, considering you are all "in with us" in the "dividends!"

Of the thousand and one incidents, actual and exaggerated, that have been borne on the breeze of rumor since the flood, we shall mention here but few, since they would not prove of any special interest to our readers at a distance, for whose satisfaction this cursory sketch was scribbled. The fortunate finding alive of the young man Schell after buffeting the billows for three miles, the heroic and happy escape of Martin Wall, after encountering the distress of a deck passage on the jail roof for an equal distance, and the remarkable presence of mind and power of perseverance shown by the colored woman, Mrs. Smith, while tossed on the waters with her family of five children for a couple of miles, afterwards effecting a safe landing place for them and her till morning, are deserving the pen of an Irving to only do them justice. The perilous condition of Mr. Wm. N. Byers and family, also, together with the considerate coolness displayed by them while dangerously surrounded, would deserve no less congratulatory mention than the kind efforts of Gov. Evans, Col. Chivington, and those skiff-constructing soldiers would demand a corresponding complimentary one. Of the various persons who proved themselves kind and humane to assist, it would be invidious to individualize, where each did all he could.

Death and Damages.

The number of persons drowned, as well as the amount of property, real and personal, that was lost and damaged has been variously estimated by varying approximations. Some think there has been about a million dollars worth of goods and property laid waste and lost, in the city and the country surrounding, and between fifteen and twenty lives

lost, or at least that many persons started Statesward *via* the Platte. Our opinion inclines us to the belief that the total amount of pecuniary loss will leave a very big breach in a million dollars.

Not knowing for certain the number of transient folks in the town, or those in the upper ranches, who are missing, we will waive expressing an opinion at present on the latter, but doubt not for a moment that a few hundred thousands worth of loss and damage was sustained by our merchants and citizens of town and country. The following are the fatal effects, as far as heard from up to date:

C. Bruce Haynes, late of the Quartermaster's office, Gumble Rosebaum, clothier, Otto Fisher, (four years old), Henry Williamson, who herded stock for General Patterson down the Platte, a woman and two children from up Cherry creek, a woman and two children from Plum creek, and a Mr. and Mrs. I. R. Tyson and two children. August Metz, of Blake street bridge, who was carried along with the torrent eighteen miles to Henderson's Island, is the only person found whom we have yet heard of. Among the heavy sufferers in property are Byers & Dailey, publishers and proprietors of the *Rocky Mountain News*, who lost their entire all, with the building and the *lot it stood on*, A. E. & C. E. Tilton, house, lot, and \$6,000 worth of goods damaged; also, F. A. Clark, Gen. Bowen, Wm. McKee, Mr. Charles, Messrs. Hunt, Metz and others, lost all they had in store or office, together with the buildings, and sand substracted lots on which they stood. Esquires Hall & Kent lost nearly all their office books and papers. The probate records, city records, commissioner's records, Judge Odell's old dockets, Judge Wilcox's dockets, and the city safe itself, all, all are gone, and whither the deponent saith not.

In the country, Messrs. Gibson Arnold, Schleier, Lloyd and Stoner, ranchmen, and scores of others, lost stock, and had their well-trimmed farms desolated into wastes of sand and gravel. D. C. Oakes lost his saw mill, part of which was impelled down the current for a few miles. Messrs. Reed, Palmer and Barnes lost, collectively, over four thousand sheep off their ranches up Cherry Creek.

Several sacks of flour which floated down the Platte have been discovered lying high and dry on sand bars, four to six miles from the city; also, many things that were given up as lost, were yesterday found, and free from damage by the action of the waterly element or by the (far worse) action of the wandering thieves that practiced prowling around for days past, seeking what they might pick up and pilfer. In some of the storages of town there was an amount of clothing and dry goods drenched, so that the owners might materially make more money selling it by the pound avoirdupois, than by the yard-stick lineal measure. But we must beg an apology of our distant readers, for our tediousness this time, and will conclude this column with the following, as

The Lesson It Teaches.

Men are mere cyphers in creation; at least, the chattels of the elements, and the creatures of circumstances and caprice. While worldly fortune favors, they think of nought but self, care little for the laws of

nature, and care less for nature's God! Providential warning will alone affect them, when their well-being and their wealth are affected at the same time. As "the uses of adversity are sweet," so the interpositions of the Almighty are found eventually salutary and gracious. That the great clouds and eternal fountains are the Lord's, and will obey his fixed laws forevermore. That his kind purposes are as high above our selfish comprehensions, as are those of the physician above the understanding of the infant he inoculates. Had we continued thickly settling Cherry creek as we commenced, and thoughtless of the future, see what terrible destruction would have been our doom, in a few years more, when the waters of heaven, obeying the fixed laws, would rush down upon us, and slay thousands instead of tens!

The people of Denver felt the professor's cursory sketch treated their flood with a proper flair. If his Irish eloquence flagged somewhat in the middle distances, he still finished strong on a ringing note of moral philosophy. Both the eloquence and the metaphysics were commented upon favorably, and when the *News* resumed publication the professor was elevated to the post of associate editor.

"Professor Goldrick's Flood Story," as it has been known these ninety-odd years since, appeared in the *Daily Commonwealth and Republican* for May 24, 1864.¹ The *Commonwealth's* two-story frame building, prudently located a little distance from the creek on the southeast corner of Front (Thirteenth) and Fifth (Larimer) streets, got its feet wet when the floodwaters spread through the West Denver bottoms, but it escaped major damage and was able to get back into operation on May 23. The rival paper hospitably opened its columns to the stricken Byers.

Simeon Whiteley, who presumably had the financial backing of John Evans, second territorial governor, had taken over the *Commonwealth* with its issue dated January 1, 1864, and was in a position to offer editorial haven to the drowned-out proprietors of the *News*.

Deeply sympathizing with our neighbors of the Rocky Mountain *News* in the calamity which has fallen upon them (more heavily, perhaps, than any other of our citizens) we have placed the *Commonwealth* office at their disposal, until the arrival of their new printing office, which will be ordered forthwith. The plan determined upon is at present to issue but one paper, the *Daily Commonwealth*, with which the subscribers of the *News* will be furnished. During this arrangement the paper will be published in the evening instead of the morning.²

Byers and Dailey had indeed lost "their entire all." Not a trace remained of the *News* building. Its site stood under five feet of muddy

¹The present copying is from the 1909 facsimile of J. E. Wharton, *History of the City of Denver* (Denver, 1866), pp. 121-43.

²*Weekly Commonwealth*, May 25, 1864.

water. The presses, type, and machinery were scattered downstream by the force of the flood and battered beyond salvage. Portions of the power press came to rest in the bed of the Platte. In 1899, when excavations were under way at the foot of Fifteenth Street for a waterworks, workmen uncovered at a depth of twelve feet the lever and other parts of the Washington hand press which had printed the first issue. Bits of type and other relics from the *News* office would be found in the sands of the creek well into the next century. The press lever was presented to the Colorado State Museum for preservation, and other souvenirs of destruction went as mementos to Byers and Dailey. Some of the building's hardwood timbering, hand-hewn in eastern Nebraska and freighted across the plains, was fished from the flotsam and survives as beams in a barn on the Albert N. Williams farm near suburban Littleton.

Contemporary observers were beguiled by the force of the flood and particularly by the ease with which it had moved the *News*' 3000-pound steam press. They thought the iron mass had been floated away, and they sought to explain this by the nature of the floodwaters. The current carried so much swept-up sand and earth, they decided, that its "specific gravity" exceeded that of iron. The press thus became buoyant and was wafted away like a cork. Byers said that a tin cup filled with floodwater settled out to half sand.

Toll of the flood finally was set at twelve lives and between half a million and a million dollars in property damage. Financial loss to the *News* partners came to \$19,200. The sum was fixed in a later court suit in which Byers and Dailey sought to quit title to the soggy real estate their plant had once occupied.³ Their brief estimated value of the building at \$6000 and itemized \$13,000 worth of equipment and a \$200 stable.

The *News* came close to contributing to the death toll as well as the property damage. Asleep in the upper half story of the building when the flood descended were John Dailey and four of his employees: Nathan A. Baker, Frank Roff, Harry Stafford, and James P. Oliver. Baker, then twenty-one, had been successively bookkeeper, pony express rider, and printer for the paper. Later he would be the founder of three pioneer Wyoming newspapers, the *Cheyenne Leader*, *South Pass News*, and *Laramie Standard*. In 1927, at the age of eighty-four, Baker recalled his night of terror for the *News* writer Milus Gay. The five men, he said, were awakened by "a roaring noise."

. . . I looked out of the window and saw a wall of water six feet high rushing down the dry creek bed at terrific speed. Before we could escape from the building, the flood waters had reached an embankment connecting the plant with the high shores of the creek. In a few seconds

³Case No. 1326, First District, Colorado Territorial Court; cited in Forbes Parkhill, *The Law Goes West* (Denver, 1956), p. 134.

we were completely isolated, with raging water surrounding the building. The Methodist church was located on the creek bank at Larimer st. The flood washed out its foundations and the building toppled into the stream. Its roof lodged on the bank at Market st. That was our salvation. A crowd gathered on the church roof, from which ropes were thrown to us. We escaped in the nick of time, going hand over hand along the ropes to shore.⁴

The perils of the Byers family alluded to by Professor Goldrick involved the concurrent rampage of the Platte. The Byerses already had moved out for the summer to their riverside ranch above town. Like his friend Horace Greeley, Byers espoused the agricultural life and always did a little farming on the side. His diary shows that he had just sold a calf for \$6.90 and picked the first lettuce of the season from his garden when the Platte rose up in the night and snatched a good part of his bottomland farm away. The Byers ranch house had been on the east bank. The river cut a new channel, putting the house on the west bank. Meantime water spread out over the Byers farm and flowed in at the doorway.

Mrs. Byers has left a picture of her marooned family's plight. As the water rose in the house they climbed up and sat on tables, "telling funny stories" as they awaited rescue. Her husband, she remembered, wrote a note stating that his wife and babies were clinging to treetops, sealed it in a bottle, and cast it adrift. Finally soldiers from Camp Weld arrived with a hastily constructed skiff in a military wagon and the Byerses were rowed to safety.⁵ Leader of the rescue expedition was a great, black-bearded bull of a man, John M. Chivington, who could thunder equally well as the Methodists' presiding elder or as colonel of volunteers. His work on that wet night probably sealed a friendship which would determine the editorial course of the *News* later in the year when an authentic military hero plunged to disgrace as a bloody butcher.

The homeless Byers family was taken in that night and sheltered for several days by territorial Governor John Evans, thereby cementing another friendship which would be long and loyal. Byers moved his wife and children back out to his silt-covered farm, but recurrent floods on May 27 and June 10 drove them into town again for temporary lodging in the Colorado Seminary building, which had been completed but not yet occupied by its first class of students.

When he wasn't shuttling his family to safety from floods Byers was trying to get his newspaper back into operation. Possibly he had the silent financial backing of Governor Evans, but at any rate his multiple losses had not eroded his determination to continue as publisher of the

⁴*Rocky Mountain News*, March 13, 1927.

⁵"The Experiences of One Pioneer Woman," typescript in Western History Department, Denver Public Library.

town's leading newspaper. On the day after the flood he sat down and penned a notice which Simeon Whiteley published for him in the *Daily Commonwealth* of May 23:

To Subscribers to the News—

In the destruction of our office, our subscription books shared the common fate, so that we are without a list of subscribers anywhere. It is not our intention that any subscriber shall miss a single number of his paper and to avoid their doing so, we hope that each will give us his address, and, as near as possible, the length of time for which their subscription is paid. When desired, the *Commonwealth* will be supplied to subscribers who have paid for the *News*, or, the *News* will be furnished from the time of its resumption for the full time for which it is paid. Send your lists at once. Will Postmasters oblige us by aiding in the matter?

Byers & Dailey

Then the partners began dickering with Whiteley for purchase of the *Commonwealth*. They concluded the deal on June 24, paying four thousand dollars, and took possession of the plant next day. Two days later the daily *Rocky Mountain News* reappeared.

The first post-deluge issue contains a statement which illustrates Byers' stubborn insistence that his paper should live. It also demonstrates the frank style with which he sometimes dealt with the customers and reveals how unprofitable frontier journalism was. Byers headed his editorial "Plain Talk":

In resuming the publication of the *Rocky Mountain News*, it will doubtless be excusable for us to indulge in a little plain talk to its friends, patrons and the public generally.

It is a little more than a month since our old office was swept away. In the building itself, and its contents, for carrying on the business, we had invested over \$12,000 in cash, all of which was a total loss. With it we lost all our files and many of our books—in the latter of which were unpaid accounts amounting to many more thousands of dollars—together with notes, due-bills, county warrants, packages of letters, legal papers, and many other articles, the monetary loss of which we cannot estimate. Many of these things we valued far more than money, and their loss is irreparable. In addition to these absolute losses, we had devoted more than five years to building up a business, which thus far had given but little satisfaction and allowed but little enjoyment in its pursuit. Of this, we expect yet to reap some return, since we have again resumed it; otherwise, that labor, too, would have been a dead loss, and it may even prove so yet, though we have a strong hope to the contrary. At any rate, we believe Colorado has been benefited by our labors, which is a consolation, even though the pecuniary loss has been ruinous to ourselves.

A few days after the destruction of our office, we published an address, in which we proposed to resume the News, upon certain conditions. We regret to say that those conditions were not complied with, except to a limited extent. Only about one-half the subscriptions asked were secured, and we did think, in their failure, we would absolutely give it up. But, the necessity of supplying our old subscribers with the papers they have paid for, the want of something to do, and the importunities of our friends, have induced us to again "put in an appearance" before the public. Having done so, the News is again, and will remain, one of the permanent institutions of the country. In other words, *we expect to stay with you!* Though unable to start in with a good office, and all the conveniences we could desire—though necessarily burthened somewhat with debt, and the tenant of "my landlord," we shall strive to do the best we can, and labor zealously to make the News, at least acceptable, until we can do better.

To make up for the deficiency in the subscription list we asked, we shall expect a liberal patronage from the businessmen of Denver. Seeing the paper re-established, we hope that many will increase the subscriptions already made, and that others who have stood back, will now step forward and lend a helping hand. Remember, we ask no gratuity, but will give full value for every dollar received.

One other vital point, and then we are done with this personal article, already spun out too long. We shall be compelled to advance prices in some branches of our business. Our rates are not in proportion with others. Since they were established, four years ago, paper and all other printer's stock has advanced more than 100 per cent. Type, and other office material, have gone up in almost the same proportion, and the price of labor has increased nearly as much. To illustrate plainly how much printer's prices have fallen below the true proportion, compared with other branches of business, we will state that for the first quarter's business of the current year, our balance sheet showed a margin of profit of only \$142.63. This is all we had to pay for the labor of two proprietors—for interest upon the money invested—the wear and tear of material—and the risk, *for three months*. Out of that would probably have to be deducted some bad debts—accounts that could never be collected; for it is notoriously and lamentably true that *some people* consider the printer a legitimate subject to victimize.

Whilst everything else has been crawling up, following gold in its airy flight, our prices have not materially changed, and many customers would always higgles and beat down at that. Flour and meat, sugar and coffee, may turn into jumping jacks, bob up and down a dozen times a week, and the dear public will stand it without a murmur; but if the printer advances his rates 10 per cent., to keep partial pace with his type founder, his paper dealer and his grocer, he is at once looked upon and pronounced an extortioner.

Who is there in Denver, or elsewhere, we ask, that would invest the money we individually have, do the work that we have done, and receive the curses and abuses that have been heaped upon us, for the pitiful sum of \$71.31½ per quarter?

We will have many things to buy, to make our office complete; therefore, we desire a prompt and liberal response in the way of subscriptions. We must forward immediate orders to the type founder, and they must be accompanied with money; therefore, we want it now, as we start out. The current expenses of our office will not fall below \$70 per day; therefore, our prices must be advanced; but the increase will be made as slight as possible, whilst some things will not be affected at all. The new schedule will be announced on the first proximo, and when published, it will be strictly adhered to.

The same issue of the paper paused to note: "That spasmodic stream called Cherry Creek is now entirely dry, and its broad channel's sands are once more glistening in the sunshine."

Today the creek has been tamed. It flows between concrete retaining walls ten feet deep as it curves down through the city. Speer Boulevard follows much of the course, a pleasant parkway planted with trees, shrubs, and grass. Every so often prisoners from the county jail are brought out to cut and burn the weedy, brushy growth in the bottom of the channel. Kids use park department sprinkling hoses as ropes to descend the retaining walls and splash about in the infrequent ponds. Now and then a berserk auto plunges over the banks to wind up with its nose buried in the sands whose mythical gold brought ox teams rolling across the continent.

The taming of Cherry Creek was not accomplished with any unseemly haste. Despite '64, Denver required several more convincings that the kitten could be a tiger. Floods of almost equal violence hit on July 25, 1875, May 22, 1878, July 14, 1912, and, even with the retaining walls, August 3, 1933. This last flood soaked much of the lower downtown business district and filled up the subway ramps under the train sheds at Union Station. But it was turn about this time for the *News*; it set type to keep the *Denver Post* going through a couple of days when gas and power supplies were cut off in that part of town. To insure that the creek would not again jump out of its confined channel, the army's Corps of Engineers completed in 1950 the three-mile-long, fifteen-million-dollar Cherry Creek Dam southeast of the city. It is now judged that Denver is secure from the havoc which can be brewed up by cloudbursts over a small, normally arid drainage basin only 414 square miles in extent.

The concrete walls which help restrain Cherry Creek's aberrant excesses were built between 1907 and 1911 by Mayor Robert W. Speer, for whom the paralleling boulevard is named. Speer the Builder, they called him, for this and other public works including the development of Civic Center. He was no friend of the *News*, which campaigned against him rigorously, but he acquired a loyal following who regarded him as the personification of Good Government, the veritable apex of all the forces for municipal betterment that were set in motion on April 6, 1860, when the populations of Auraria and Denver met in the moonlight on the Larimer Street bridge and voted to unite.

City government dates from that moonlight meeting, and the *News* amended the dateline of its masthead from the fence-straddling "Auraria and Denver, J.T." to "Denver, Jefferson." The paper had been demanding consolidation through the autumn months of 1859, and several preliminary moves led up to the April 6 gathering. The legislature of the provisional territory of Jefferson, as one of its first acts, approved joint incorporation for Auraria, Denver City, and Highland on December 3. Full text of the act was printed on page one of the *News* for December 14. The legislators begged the issue of what the town should be called by granting their charter to the "City of Denver, Auraria and Highland," which was given powers, among others, to "restrain, suppress, and prohibit tippling shops, billiard tables, tenpin alleys, houses of prostitution and all disorderly houses and restrain gaming and gambling houses, and all kinds of public indecencies." The provision could have been a stiff blow to a large portion of the constituency, but fortunately the language was permissive.

Under this charter an election was held December 19, and the amiable Southerner, John C. Moore, later to edit the *Mountaineer*, was elected mayor. He called a first session of the City Council for January 21, but in the meantime a mass meeting of citizens on December 26 voted to override the statute and shorten the name of their town to "Denver City." Mayor Moore's government appears not to have been entirely convincing. The Aurarians held out but finally called an election on April 3 to vote on the question of joining with Denver City. Consolidation carried 146 to 39, and the moonlight meeting completed the wedding.

This first city government, however, dwindled away before the year was out and gave almost no account of itself during the era of the Turkey War, the rule of the Bummers, the Byers kidnaping, and the People's Courts. In September another meeting was called to consider a new civic constitution for "The People's Government of the City of Denver." The constitution was adopted, *viva voce*, on September 21 in Apollo Hall, and another election called for October 1. The new rules did not provide for a mayor but placed authority in the hands of a six-man "Legislative Council" to which D. C. Oakes, J. M. Taylor, William Dunn, C. A. Cook, L. N. Tappan, and J. M. Broadwell were elected. This council on October 24 designated the *News* as "official paper" of the city. It then gave way to a new slate chosen the following April 6.

By that time a legal territory of Colorado had come into being. At last, on November 7, 1861, the territorial legislature gave Denver its first legitimate existence as a civic entity squaring with all the laws of the land. An election was hastily contrived for November 18. Denver's first legal officers were: C. A. Cook, Mayor; P. P. Wilcox, police magistrate; W. M. Keith, city marshal; J. Bright Smith, city clerk and attorney; E. D. Boyd, city surveyor; Joseph B. Cass, city treasurer; George W. Brown, city collector; D. D. Palmer, street commissioner; and H. J. Brendlinger,

John Nye, L. Mayer, W. W. Barlow, J. E. Vawter, and L. Buttrick, aldermen. George E. Thornton was appointed chief of police.

No less devious was the struggle toward the territorial status and the statehood the *News* insistently demanded for its orphan Pike's Peak country. The rending noises of disunion were so loud in Washington that Congress almost couldn't hear the complaints of a few thousand gold rushers that they were without effective government.

Denver began as an unwilling resident of Kansas Territory, and Kansas didn't much care whether or not the settlement recognized its authority. It was otherwise occupied. John Brown was kicking up a fuss, and the border ruffians were on the prod. The first Kansas territorial legislature designated the whole nebulous western end of its jurisdiction as Arapahoe County in 1855. The county embraced most of what is now the eastern half of Colorado, right up to the Continental Divide. County officials were appointed, but they never bothered to take up residence in their assigned territory. Kansas granted charters to the St. Charles and Denver City town companies, and in 1858 Governor James Denver sent H. P. A. Smith, Hickory Rogers, and E. W. Wynkoop forth to Pike's Peak to constitute a county government. Their authority never was recognized by the Pike's Peakers, although they did get together on November 6, 1858, and elect A. J. Smith as their representative in the Kansas legislature.

By February 1859 the gold rush was on, and Kansas, anticipating a large new population on its western reaches, abolished Arapahoe County by splitting it up into Montana, El Paso, Oro, Broderick, and Frémont counties. In Denver, preoccupied with gold dust and nuggets, the first-comers met on March 28, elected a complement of officers for Montana County, and promptly forgot all about them in the confusion. When William Byers arrived with his press a few weeks later he found no one paying any attention to the officials and the whole affair so uncertain the general impression was that they had been elected for Arapahoe County. Montana County withered away for want of recognition.

The Pike's Peak country was busy seceding from Kansas and setting up its own "State of Jefferson."

One of the leaders of the secessionists was the newly arrived editor. In the first issue of the *News* Byers reported on a public meeting lately held on "the 11th inst." in the room now immediately below his busy press. Dr. Levi Russell had been called to the chair in Wootton's saloon—the *News* dignified it for the occasion as "Wootton's Hall"—and the company present had highly resolved "that the different precincts be requested to appoint delegates to meet in convention on the 15th inst. to take into consideration the propriety of organizing a new State or Territory." The meeting calmly took over from the distant Kansas legislature the responsibility for governing the region and as a condescending gesture seated the recently elected county officers: ". . . on account of our dis-

tance from, and the difficulty of communicating with, the proper authorities, we the people who are the power here, authorize the late county officers-elect to enter at once upon the discharge of their respective duties." It was audacious, but it was democracy in action.

The April 15 convention wound up

Resolved—That the discussions of this convention shall have but one object, viz.: The formation of a new and independent State of the Union

and fixing June 6 as the date for a constitutional convention. By that time Byers had his *News* in operation and was a figure of prominence in the community. He was chosen as one of Auraria's delegates to the convention, and when the body convened in the Denver House he was chosen as its president. His partner, Thomas Gibson, was named secretary, and Byers & Gibson were appointed public printers.

This convention was in session two days, despite the fever generated by the successes up at Jackson's Bar and Gregory's Gulch, which badly cut into attendance and seemed to distract the founding fathers from business at hand. They managed to confirm choice of the name "Jefferson," Byers appointed drafting committees (he put himself on the one to consider boundaries and Bill of Rights), and then they adjourned until August 1, hopeful of a larger roll call.

When the convention resumed on that date Byers passed the presidency on to Captain A. F. Garrison. Gibson remained as secretary to keep the *News* on the inside, and George West, who had helped print the Greeley extra, was designated sergeant at arms. By this time views of moderationists were prevailing, and it was decided to start by seeking only a territory rather than a state. Byers' committee was not modest, however, in setting boundaries. It calculated the territory of Jefferson should embrace all of what is now Colorado, plus most of southern Wyoming, the Nebraska panhandle, and a slice of eastern Utah. The convention remained in session for a week, and it drafted a memorial to Congress demanding "immediate" organization of a territorial government.

The proposition was submitted to the electorate on September 5, giving the voters a choice between a state and a territory. If there were, as claimed, 30,000 persons in the region, not very many of them interrupted their prospecting and sluicing to cast ballots. The vote was 2007 for a territory, 649 for a state. Without waiting for Congress to act on, or even receive, their memorial, the Pike's Peakers immediately began organizing their provisional territory. An election was set for October 3 to choose delegates to still another convention called for October 10. In this round of balloting Beverly D. Williams was elected Jefferson's delegate to Congress, and he set off for Washington clutching the memorial. Congress refused to give him standing as a delegate but

admitted him to the lobby of the House of Representatives as a measure of left-handed recognition of the provisional people's government at Pike's Peak.

There was a minority of citizens, however, which had doubts about the legality of all this extemporaneous politicking. They recognized the jurisdiction of Kansas. So for the October 3 election they got together a full ticket of officials for Arapahoe County, Kansas Territory. These were elected by a fraction of the 4386 citizens who cast ballots for congressional delegate, the hot contest of the day. Thus the governmental confusion was compounded, and the *News* was moved to comment editorially on October 6:

So it goes; one day we understand that we are cut off from Kansas; the next, we have cut ourselves off, and will pay no regard to Kansas Legislation, but have an independent provisional government of our own; and the very next, when there is a chance for a petty office under Kansas laws, there are hundreds ready to enter the lists, and before their certificates of election are dry in their pockets you will hear them lustily advocating "independent government," and "let Kansas go to the dogs." When this county scheme was started, why was it not carried out, and members of the Kansas Legislative Assembly elected, also? Nobody seems to have thought of that except two or three shrewd ones who, we learn, received a few votes for Representative, and under them will claim seats in the next Kansas legislature, not the representatives of the people, but of a few of their friends.

Here we go, a regular triple-headed government machine. South of 40 [degrees latitude] we hang on the skirts of Kansas; north of 40 on those of Nebraska. Straddling the line, we have just elected a Delegate to Congress from the Territory of Jefferson; and ere long we shall have in full blast a Provisional Government of Rocky Mountain growth and manufacture. This last we hope may succeed, and swallow up the delectable uncertainty of law now existing; when one man claims that he lives in Arapahoe county, while his neighbor asserts that he is in Montana [county]—where one man acknowledges Kansas laws, and another says he is on Indian land where no law can reach. A compact of the people under any name, state, territory, or provisional government, if either can be effected, is better than the present, and if some such is not soon adopted, with a determination to abide by, and respect it, we bid fair to out-Kansas Kansas herself.

The efforts of Pike's Peak to secede and establish its own government were being watched with some interest and no little venom on the other side of the Great Plains. The *Missouri Republican* came forth with the helpful suggestion that Jefferson and any other territory seeking recognition should be administered by a federal governor and two appointed judges. The *News* gave this idea its scorn on September 17:

. . . It is simply a preposterous idea in this day and age that 20,000, or any other number of intelligent American citizens, as are the citizens of Jefferson, will submit to be "well-governed" by three of those "demagogues and place-hunters" or that laws for their government can be enacted without their having a voice therein.

Advocates of grass-roots democracy through a new territory pressed right ahead with their plans, and the *News* gave its full support both editorially and in the frontier counterparts of smoke-filled rooms, where Byers was an active and respected figure. His experience as a member of the first Nebraska territorial legislature presumably lent added weight to his words. One of the delegates to the new convention denounced the entire proposition as a "gigantic Vigilance Committee," but he was given no heed. The territorial constitution was worked over again, and Jefferson trudged back to the polls on October 24. The constitution was ratified, 1852 to 280. Robert W. Steele was elected governor.

To aid the voters in making up their minds the *News* had published on October 20 the entire proposed Jefferson constitution, word for legalistic word, column upon column. And when the returns were in the paper immediately banished "Kansas Territory" from its masthead and substituted "Jefferson Territory." Said an editorial on November 10:

. . . We hope and expect to see it [Jefferson] stand until we can boast of a million of people, and look upon a city of a hundred thousand souls, having all the comforts and luxuries of the most favored. Then we will hear the whistle of the locomotive and the rattle of trains to and from the Atlantic and Pacific. . . . The future of Jefferson Territory—soon to be a sovereign State—is glorious with promise.

Governor Steele, an Ohio-Iowa lawyer who had served with Byers in the Nebraska legislature, called the assembly of Jefferson Territory into its first session on November 7 in Denver, using the second floor of a building which had been the stage office of the Leavenworth & Pike's Peak Express. Between them, Steele and the Jefferson legislature held dominion until Colorado Territory was established in 1861, but it was a regime of steadily diminishing authority. Debility set in before it was six months old, and there was difficulty mustering a quorum for the second general assembly on November 12, 1860. This body soon adjourned to Golden City and set up shop there, making the foothills town temporarily the territorial capital. The move was made, said the *News* in a huff, only because "board is offered at six dollars a week—wood, lights, and hall rent free." The sovereign territory of Jefferson slowly faded away, but it had more or less bridged the gap between the indifference of Kansas and the creation by Congress of Colorado Territory.

Byers recalled these days of toddling efforts at self-government for Hubert Bancroft in 1884. Only a little had been done toward Anglo-Saxon law and order before the young editor's arrival in April of 1859.

. . . In the winter of 1858 & 1859 the people informally chose a delegate to Congress, in fact they chose 2, at least 2 went from here to Washington & endeavor[ed] to get some kind of an organization or provision for the government of the country through Congress. They did not accomplish anything. In the spring of 1859 soon after I came here there was a movement to organise a State Government. There was such an immense migration of people across the plains, so many coming in, that the sanguine people believed that we would have people enough before the end of the season to form a State. Elections were held about the first of May in the various camps here for delegates to attend a convention to assemble in Denver to organise a State Government. That was what was talked about at the time. That convention assembled on the 22nd of June, held a brief session, concluded that the time had not arrived for organising a State Government & adjourned to assemble again in August. In August they re-assembled & again concluded it was not best to make any effort to organise a State Government, but took preliminary steps toward the organisation of a Provisional Government & that was done in the fall of that year. A Governor & full list of State officers were elected & a Legislative Assembly without any authority of Congress & entirely founded upon the will of the people. That Provisional Government enacted Laws & enforced them as far as it could & continued to act & be partially recognized until Congress passed the act for the organisation of the Territory. . . .⁶

A little later the editor of the *News* gave Jerome Smiley an explanation of the choice of the name "Jefferson":

We wanted our territory named Jefferson. Why? Because it was part of the great Louisiana purchase, effected by Jefferson in 1803; and not only did President Jefferson purchase this country, but he sent out the early exploration parties into it, like the Lewis and Clark, and others. This country was ever the object of his fondest hopes and confidence, and this State might with propriety and justice have been named after him. But Congress would not have it so. They said no State should be named after a man, Washington alone excepted. They didn't consult us as to our wishes, but finally chose the name Colorado, the others under discussion having been Jefferson, Idaho and Montana. Colorado is a more euphonious and romantic name than Jefferson would have made, and none of us objected to it. But I have always thought that one State carved out of the great Louisiana purchase should have been named after Jefferson. When we started the movement for a State in 1859, and were discussing a name, one delegate from the mountains rose in the argument, and made an impassioned appeal in favor of calling the

⁶Bancroft ms., Pac Ms L6.

State "Bill Williams." Bill Williams was one of the earliest of the mountaineers. He seemed to be ubiquitous, for there were all sorts of places all over the mountains named after him. He seemed to be worshipped by the mountaineers, and this admirer of his could not be comforted when the convention unkindly laughed at the idea of calling the new State "Bill Williams."⁷

As the year 1860 ran out the territory of Jefferson was tottering but not quite defunct and Delegate Williams at last was meeting with some success in Washington. He had obtained introduction of bills for a new territory into both houses of Congress in January 1860. The Senate bill carried the name Idaho; the House version preferred Tahosa—supposedly an Indian word meaning "dweller of the mountain tops." These bills, however, fell into limbo in the great division over whether Kansas and Nebraska were to be admitted as free or slave states.

In February of 1861, Williams pressed his suit again. The Senate bill, with the substitution of "Colorado" for "Idaho" at Williams' insistence, was passed on February 2. The House agreed with some changes on February 6, and the Senate concurred February 26. President Buchanan signed the act creating Colorado Territory on February 28, but in recognition of his lame-duck position deferred to his successor on the appointment of territorial officials.

There had been other names suggested for the newest territory. Governor Denver of Kansas had wanted the region called Shoshone. Proposals at the various Jefferson conventions had included Cibola (Spanish for "buffalo"), Platte, Lula, Arapahoe, Nemara, San Juan, Tampa, Wapola, Lafayette, Colona, Columbus, Franklin, and simply Pike's Peak (citing the precedent of Rhode Island). It has not been established how or why Colorado (Spanish for "red") entered the picture and won Delegate Williams' favor, but the name is not inappropriate. Large areas of Colorado soil on both its eastern and western slopes have been colored by the decomposition of red sandstone formations which once, before the upthrust of the Rockies, overlaid the entire region.

News of the admission of Colorado Territory was six days coming by telegraph, Pony Express, and stage, but when the *News* published the dispatch on March 4 there was rejoicing in the dusty streets.

The paper of that day immediately adds "C.T." after "Denver" in the masthead, but its comment on the grand occasion is a little gem of left-handedness:

COLORADO.

We are enabled to day to convey to our readers the welcome intelligence of the passage of the bill of the organization of our Territory. There may be an error in this conclusion, but we think not. . . .

⁷Smiley, *History of Denver*, pp. 317-18.

This is a consummation long desired, and there is now an assurance of established law and order, which will send a thrill of joy to every city, village and hamlet throughout the Rocky Mountains.

Full text of the act establishing the territory appeared March 16.

One of the early acts of Abraham Lincoln's administration was to supply the new territory of Colorado with its first legal officials. For governor he chose a picturesque West Pointer, William Gilpin of Missouri, Pennsylvania, and Oregon. The other appointees were: Lewis L. Weld, secretary; William L. Stoughton, attorney general; Francis M. Case, surveyor general; Copeland Townsend, marshal; and B. F. Hall, S. N. Pettis, and Charles L. Armour, judges of the supreme court. The *News* reported the appointments on March 27.

Gilpin was a man of dash and eloquence. He had been educated in a private school in England and at the University of Pennsylvania before going to West Point. As a second lieutenant of dragoons he served through the Seminole War and then went west to take up law and politics and to sing a booming bass in the manifest-destiny choir. He practiced law in Independence, Missouri, and was elected to the state legislature. The plains and the Rockies were not unknown country to Gilpin. He went with Frémont to Oregon in 1843 and there drafted the memorial to Congress asking for admission of that territory. He claimed he was one of the founders of Portland. During the Mexican War he saw service with Doniphan as a cavalry major, and later, now a colonel, led a force of twelve hundred men out onto the prairie to pacify hostile Indians. He had wintered in the Pike's Peak country in 1847-48, and so he knew where he was going when Lincoln dispatched him west again in 1861.

A friend and protégé of Andrew Jackson, Gilpin had traveled in high circles ever since Old Hickory appointed him to West Point. A brother was attorney general under Van Buren. Frémont was a friend and companion of the trail. Gilpin had been an adviser to Senator Thomas Benton of Missouri, and when Lincoln went to Washington, Gilpin went along with him. The Missourian was a member of the personal bodyguard of one hundred picked men who slept in the White House as the gaunt man from Springfield entered upon the duties which brought him martyrdom.

Even before he became Colorado's first territorial governor Gilpin was the leather-lunged, jewel-worded apostle of the West. He was the devoted enemy of everything represented by the phrase "Great American Desert." So much so that in his writings he pivoted the world on a Rocky Mountain axis. The West's climate was incomparably salubrious; its soils so fertile the farmer didn't even need a plow. On one of his high flights Gilpin drew a direct-ratio comparison between the Rockies and

what he decided were the mountains of the Holy Land, and what the one had accomplished for mankind, he implied, the other could top:

What cardinal element have we, in the immense mental system of our civilization, which has not come to us and with us from thence? Hence (from this Plateau of Syria) have resounded through all time and into every heart, the direct oral teachings of Jehovah and of Jesus: hence have issued forth the miraculous alphabet and the numerals: hence have come the cereals and animals of our agriculture, wine, and fruits: hence our religion, law, social manners, history, music, poetry, and arts: from hence, as from the cradle of nativity, have issued forth for our inheritance, to abide with us forever, "the unconquerable mind and freedom's holy flame!"⁸

The West, Gilpin would like to point out to everyone, had mountains, too, and moreover it was smack on the *isothermal axis* of the universe, along which for fifty centuries had flowed

the immortal fire of civilization revealed to man. This central current has reached the Plateau of America, up which it will ascend to plant the sacred fires over its expanse and shine upon the world with renewed effulgence. Such is the resplendent era and the gorgeous promise unveiled to humanity. . . .⁹

Editor Byers, a little dazed, concluded that William Gilpin was "a very peculiar man," and the *News* eyed his administration carefully, particularly where hardheaded matters of public finance were concerned. Bernard DeVoto since has commented that everything Gilpin dreamed up "is and always was nonsense," and Wallace Stegner has written:

. . . The Manifest Destiny which he had learned from Benton, and which was a creed and a policy of his generation, was a passionate vision to Gilpin. He saw the West through a blaze of mystical fervor, as part of a grand geopolitical design, the overture to global harmony; and his conception of its resources and its future as a home for millions was as grandiose as his rhetoric, as unlimited as his faith, as splendid as his capacity for inaccuracy.¹⁰

The visionary Gilpin, who awed and puzzled his constituents but was much honored and loved by them, arrived in his shabby little capital on May 27, 1861. There was cannon firing in honor of his arrival, the

⁸William Gilpin, *Mission of the North American People* (Philadelphia, 1874), p. 53.

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰Stegner, *op. cit.*, p. 2.

News records, and a grand levee and assembly ball was appointed for the Tremont House at "7½ P.M." Gilpin cast down to the multitude from the hotel's balcony a few of his radiant words. "A large number of Denver's fairest ladies were . . . present," the inspired News reporter said, "and, like nature's flowers on our mountains' brow, beautified the balcony, creating an ornament and an interest to the lookers up from below."

The years immediately ahead would be difficult ones for Gilpin, but he never lost his verve or his eloquence. He died in Denver on January 19, 1894, "a man," Jerome Smiley said, "of no ordinary type, brave, generous, enthusiastic, impracticable in some things, and of winning ways in his intercourse with his fellow-man." One of his successors as governor of Colorado, Frederick W. Pitkin, retold to Hubert Bancroft a popular anecdote which purported to illustrate Gilpin's enthusiasm for the castles words can build.

In his later years, the story went, Gilpin became a great street-corner conversationalist who, quite literally, buttonholed his acquaintances. He would reach out, grasp a vest button of his friend, and twist it idly while, with eyes closed, he let his words and visions soar. One busy man, Pitkin asserted, took out his penknife, cut off the button Gilpin was holding, and hurried on to tend to a matter of urgent moment. He returned a half hour later and Gilpin, eyes still closed, was at the same spot. Still talking, still holding the button in front of him.¹¹

This eccentric man bequeathed to American history a substantial part of what DeVoto and others have denounced as the "Western myth," and it also fell to his lot to have to cope with treason and insurrection on the Far Western border. Here, too, his efforts would be disavowed.

Lincoln's first annual message to Congress on December 3, 1861, gives hints of what his appointee was facing:

The Territories of Colorado, Dakota, and Nevada, created by the last Congress, have been organized, and civil administration has been inaugurated therein under auspices especially gratifying when it is considered that the leaven of treason was found existing in some of these new countries when the Federal officers arrived there. . . . I submit the resolutions of the legislature of Colorado, which evidence the patriotic spirit of the people of the Territory. So far the authority of the United States has been upheld in all the Territories, as it is hoped it will be in the future. I commend their interests and defense to the enlightened and generous care of Congress.

¹¹Bancroft ms., Pac Ms. L44.

CHAPTER TEN

A Place Called Gloriéta

THE Civil War in the West, as a phrase, usually doesn't mean what the words imply. When generals and historians speak of "the Wilderness," "the Army of the Frontier," or "the battles of the West" they are talking about scenes and events eight hundred miles or more to the eastward of the thinly scattered, then forgotten outposts in the Rockies. During the war years the concept of the West moved back again to the east to where there were towns and river ports, railroads and populations worth battling over. The surge of a nation's westering, which had been so imagination-filling a few years earlier, so proudly to be hailed in Fourth of July orations, would have to wait while armies ground out a bitter decision: one nation or two? And by the time the last gun spoke before Appomattox, westering would have changed its nature. It would be a matter no longer of fierce, lonely trail blazing but of development and utilization: a process of filling up the empty places, of dispossessing Indians who thought the empty places already more than filled, a great thrusting out of railroads and telegraph lines, and the plowing of virgin sod.

Considering the number and magnitude of urgencies near at hand, it is not a little surprising that the riven government of the United States should have found time to create a territory of Colorado for a few thousand distant gold miners, that the heartsick Lincoln could have found, in the midst of dismemberment, the boldness to send out a new government to a new people. Denver and the *Rocky Mountain News* thought differently, of course. The action had been scandalously, shamefully delayed, and the officials were all too slow in coming. Yet how near Richmond must have seemed to Washington in those days, and how remote, in space and time and importance, the village of Denver, not yet two years old. Far more men soon would meet in battle at a little creek called Bull Run than there were in all the Western country five hundred miles in any direction from the importunate new capital of Colorado Territory.

The West was in the far backwaters of the rebellion, and it would have been strange indeed had the situation been otherwise. But the deep division which split friend from friend reached the frontier too. Here also there was arming, drilling, marching, and some blood spilled. Most

histories of the war ignore the minor maneuverings and skirmishings in the Far West, or dismiss them with a paragraph, a page or two at most.

Yet in New Mexico there is a place called La Gloriéta. As Western distances run, it is not too far from Denver, not so far that it couldn't be reached afoot, in forced marches, by a regiment of Union volunteers.

What happened at La Gloriéta on March 26 and 28 of 1862 can be made the basis of very large speculations. There, among the rocks and adobe walls, a force of eleven hundred men, mostly Colorado volunteers with a few regulars, met the Texans of General Henry H. Sibley's invading brigade in a battle which, at minimum, determined the destiny of the entire West for the next three years.

The Battle of Gloriéta Pass has been called the "Gettysburg of the West"—and the losses on both sides were proportionately greater. Gloriéta "saved the West for the Union." The wild Pike's Peakers, so the Texas Rebels said, fought with subhuman viciousness and a violent, exultant abandon. They were "devils" and "regular demons, upon whom iron and lead had no effect." In the end Sibley retreated from New Mexico with fewer than two thousand of his original force of thirty-seven hundred men, and the Confederacy gave up its plans for conquest of the Rockies and their gold mines.

Sibley's invasion of New Mexico was frontal assault, and as the most notable action of the Western war it will be discussed more fully presently; but there also had been subversion to contend with.

When William Gilpin arrived in Denver City on May 27, 1861, to establish his territorial government the town was split in sentiment. The first substantial gold discoveries had been made by Georgians. There had been but recently a newspaper openly "secesh" in sympathies. Many of the leading citizens, including the first mayor, were Southerners.

Perhaps a majority of the Peakers were Midwesterners and loyalists, although the *News* assayed North-South feelings as "about evenly divided."¹ Until the first political campaign was over, and the territory safely in the Republican fold, the paper adopted for itself and urged upon others a policy of avoiding sharp party lines "for the good of the Union."² But the loyalties boiled up in hot words, fist fights, and occasional pot shots about the streets. Tension increased as the *News* headlined on April 18: "Most Exciting News! Commencement of Hostilities! Batteries Open on Sumpter!" When word of the fall of Sumter reached Denver the Southerners were jubilant and the Stars and Bars flew briefly over the city.

On the morning of April 24 the Confederate flag was seen billowing from a staff on top of Wallingford & Murphy's general store near what is now Sixteenth and Larimer streets. The store stood next door to

¹*Rocky Mountain News*, May 1, 1861.

²*Ibid.*, July 17, 1861.

Criterion Hall, where the polished, handsome Charley Harrison held forth, his pearl-handled Colt's on each hip, as one of the acknowledged leaders of the Southern element. An angry, turbulent crowd soon gathered in the rutted street in front of Wallingford & Murphy's. There were shouted demands that the flag be hauled down and equally belligerent refusals. Finally Samuel M. Logan, soon to become a captain of the 1st Regiment of Colorado Volunteers, elbowed his way through the fuming but indecisive mob, climbed to the top of the building, and ran down the Rebel ensign.

The Confederate coup failed. On the following night the Unionists countered with a bonfire rally complete with brass band and patriotic speeches. And resolutions. The mass meeting resolved

That, as for Colorado, she, with willing hearts and ready feet, will follow the flag and keep step to the music of the Union.

That the government of Washington is good enough for us—that it is the best government the world ever saw—that we will sustain it. . . .

That the flag of Colorado Territory is the STAR SPANGLED BANNER.

That we desire peace in our midst, and that each one of us will exert himself to preserve peace and harmony in this Territory, among our fellow-citizens, because we love peace, and lest we may have need of all for common defense against the Indian tribes around us.³

It was further "the sentiment of the committee" that a note of support be dispatched to President Lincoln.

To the President of the United States:

The eyes of the whole world are upon you—the sympathies of the American People are with you—and may the God of Battles sustain the *Stars and Stripes*.

R. Sopris, President

Scott J. Anthony, Secretary

There were in Denver at this point no federal forces of any kind, military or civil; Gilpin still was en route to his post. On hand, however, were two militia companies, and they existed, characteristically, on either side of Cherry Creek and on either side of the secession issue. Auraria had the Jefferson Rangers, a veteran outfit with service honors for its duties in the Turkey War of the previous year. The Rangers were commanded by Captain H. H. C. Harrison—no kin to Charley—and were Union men. On the other side of the creek a mounted company of Denver Guards paraded now and then on dress occasions. Their commanding officer was the "Little Thunderer," W. Park McClure, lawyer, duelist, and sometime postmaster. McClure was an ardent secessionist. Fortunately both outfits were dying on the vine, drill nights had become

³Ibid., April 26, 1861.

highly irregular and informal, and the opposing forces made no attempt to convert Cherry Creek into a Bull Run.

Festivities upon the arrival of Governor Gilpin served both to promote a truce in squabbles and to lend support to the Union faction. The assembly in front of the Tremont House to greet the new executive was patriotically "grand and glorious," the *News* reported. Gilpin was introduced by Hiram P. Bennet, soon to become territorial delegate to Congress, who made a "polished and patriotic little speech." Then, the *News* reporter continued:

. . . Gov. Gilpin responded in a somewhat lengthy speech, and in a style and manner which seemed to suit and satisfy all parties present. His remarks were clearly and cautiously composed, not committing himself on anything, yet assuring and inspiring the hearers with the feeling of being interested and impartially devoted towards all the sections and the citizens of our Territory; and of being loyal and sound toward the Union and the Constitution.

His appearance is pleasing and dignified, and his manner as a speaker betrays the scholar, the thinker and man of calm judgment and deep discrimination. . . . He alluded briefly to the troubled conditions of the Union, and seemed to be confident that the great battle of patriotism versus treason would be amicably adjusted. . . .

He closed with the following beautiful apostrophe, as near as we could get it:

"Hail to America! Land of our birth.

"Hail to her magnificent continental domain.

"Hail to her liberty-loving sons, and her matrons and maidens.

"Hail to her, as she is! May she never become divided or her glory less dim."⁴

As the Gilpin regime began to organize itself, virtually as a military government, the old territory of Jefferson gave its last gasp. On June 6, "Governor" Steele abdicated in a formal proclamation to the people:

By virtue of the authority in me vested, I, R. W. Steele, Governor of the Territory of Jefferson under the Provisional Government, and in and by virtue of my election by a majority of the People of the then called government of the People of the Mining Region, unrecognized by the General Government, at the base of the Rocky Mountains, on the East and at the center thereof, and placing our confidence in that "Overruling Providence" that has for a long period of time, steadied us as an American People, through so many difficulties, by foes seen and unseen, I therefore issue this my proclamation in view of the arrival of Governor Wm. Gilpin, and other officers of the United States, whom I recognize as being duly in authority. I deem it but obligatory upon me, by virtue of my office, to yield unto "Caesar the things that are Caesar's" and I

⁴Ibid., May 28, 1861.

hereby command and direct that all officers holding commissions under me, especially all Judges, Justices of the Peace, &c., shall surrender the same and from this date shall abstain from exercising the duties of all offices they may have held under me by virtue of said commissions, and further I advise and recommend to all law and order loving citizens to submit to the laws of the United States and restrain themselves from deeds of violence which so long have made our peculiar position almost a bye word in the eyes of the civilized world. Again I advise my fellow citizens who know me "so long and so well," to yield obedience to the Laws of the United States, and do it by attending to your proper and legitimate avocations whether Agricultural or Mining.

Gilpin had a system of courts functioning by July 10, and on September 9 the first lawful general assembly convened in Denver. The legislature enacted a civil and criminal code, established counties, made the penalty for counterfeiting gold dust or coins one to fourteen years, and also, by joint resolution, proclaimed Colorado's fealty to the Union.

Although he had no funds—the territorial treasury "was like the bed of Cherry creek in drouthy midsummer," Smiley says—Gilpin began to gird for war. He ordered the recruiting of two companies and then of the 1st Regiment of Colorado Volunteer Infantry. To arm his troops, Gilpin sent his military staff around to buy up any serviceable firearm the people could be persuaded to sell. Nearly every Coloradan of the times had a gun of some kind, and soon a weird arsenal of ill-matched arms—shot-guns, rifles, derringers, pistols of all models and calibers—was accumulated. The Denver insurgents also were trying to buy weapons to send to the South or to arm themselves for possible domestic rebellion. They published small handbills listing the types of guns they would buy and the prices they would pay.

Through the summer of 1861 North-South skirmishing continued in the streets and saloons. It was largely a vocal warfare, but sometimes there was a shot. Late in August a bunch of the boys from the 1st Colorado, spurring it in full military tradition, started a handsome fight in a brothel operated by a lady friend of Charley Harrison. The sports and blacklegs from the Criterion took offense at this unchivalrous deportment in a public boudoir and set out in a body to teach the ruffian Yanks a lesson in Southern manners. But they were outnumbered and got the worst of it.

The same night another task force from the Criterion beat up a sentry guarding the building used as a barracks by the 1st Colorados. Harrison and John Cody, uncle of "Buffalo Bill," were arrested but released under bond. Then came a Saturday night, August 24. A group of soldiers took umbrage at being denied entrance to the Criterion and started a free-for-all that wrecked the establishment. The rumor got out that Harrison and his gang had received reinforcements from southern Colorado insurgents and that they planned to raid banks and business establish-

ments and put Denver to the torch. Military guards were doubled, and soldiers in pairs patrolled the streets.

The inevitable gunfire began sometime after midnight, and it was asserted that the first shots issued from the Criterion. Private George McCullough was hit in the ankle. Another soldier took a ball through his left ear lobe. Bugles sounded, and a company marched up in close order to place a cannon with its muzzle peering straight into the Criterion at point-blank range. Two hours later Harrison was arrested and placed in chains. He was put on trial before territorial Chief Justice Benjamin F. Hall on September 3, was fined five thousand dollars, but escaped imprisonment on his promise to quit the territory. The handsome Charley, *sauve, debonair*, a ladies' man and a killer, sold out the Criterion and departed. He did not return, though he tried.⁵

Meanwhile Governor Gilpin was stepping up recruitment of his 1st Regiment, boldly meeting expenses with scrip in the form of unauthorized drafts on the United States Treasury. John P. Slough, politically wrong but a "War Democrat" who rated as "unflinching," was commissioned as the regiment's colonel. Samuel F. Tappan was appointed lieutenant colonel, and the post of major went to John M. Chivington, presiding elder of the Methodist Episcopal Church for the Rocky Mountain district, the man who would rescue the flood-stranded Byers family the following spring. Chivington first was offered the regimental chaplaincy, which he declined, asking for a fighting assignment.

Thirty acres of Platte bottomland about two miles up the river near the Byers ranch was selected as a training ground and named Camp Weld in honor of territorial Secretary Lewis L. Weld. By October 24 the *News* could report that the camp had a headquarters building, barracks, mess rooms, guardhouse, and hospital built in a hollow square around the parade grounds. Denver citizens took to driving out from town to watch the evening drill. The paper listed the official blueprint for the life of a soldier:

Order of Camp duty. Reveille at daylight, and breakfast call at 7 o'clock. Guard mount at 8, and company drill at 9 A.M. Battalion drill at 2½ P.M., and Dress Parade a half hour before sundown. Tattoo at 8½ P.M., and at 9, lights are extinguished and all visitors withdraw from camp.

All regular and rigorous enough to be standard soldiering. But the 1st Colorados were highly irregular troopers.

They deserted at will, cussed out their officers with impunity, jayhawked the countryside for food to supplement army rations, and

⁵A full story of Harrison and his lurid involvements with Denver's past is told by Stanley Zamonski in "Colorado Gold and the Confederacy," *The Denver Westerners' Brand Book*: 1956 (Denver, 1957), pp. 87ff.

generally raised hell. Taps was merely a signal to head for the fleshpots in town. A supply sergeant sold off company property in his care, including several hundred bushels of grain, and lost the whole stake at monte. He was secesh anyway and deserted a few days later. Company F was sent to Fort Laramie to pick up arms and hurrahed the countryside going and coming on a whiskey diet. Private Ovando J. Hollister, Company F, who would become an associate editor of the *News* in 1868, tells of a passing captain who chanced to drop an ill-timed remark about the "common soldier" in the hearing of one of the volunteers. The private sounded off:

"G——d d——d old white livered whiskey-tub! If you don't eat them words in three winks of a louse's tail, we'll tear you limb from gut! By G—d! you'll find we're uncommon soldiers, first you know. We don't 'low no such things as you to insult us, if you do wear shoulder-straps."⁶

One regimental unit discovered there was a standing order to detail the guard from men in the left of the ranks. So they began falling in, Hollister says, "crowded together like a flock of sheep worried by dogs"—"there *was* no left." One morning they formed ranks in three circles. Another company, enlisted as mounted rifles, refused to take the oath when it was decided they would have to serve as foot soldiers. Still another unit, deprived of its whiskey ration by the commander, marched to his quarters and "gave him three groans." He slapped the whole outfit in the guardhouse. Arrest in Denver City didn't mean much, however. Any misbehaving soldier who was picked up by the city police was promptly delivered by comrades who battered the jail door off its hinges. On the trail the 1st Colorados supplied themselves with horses, wagons, and food by seizure from any ranch or farm unlucky enough to be in their line of march.

The candid Hollister gives a riotous picture of the carousing Firsters as they waited, bored and devilish, at Camp Weld for their hour of glory to come:

Near the 1st of December the good people of Denver, alarmed at the growing insolence of the soldiers among whom no one seem[ed] disposed or was able to maintain much discipline, organized a police to preserve order in town. Henceforth it became the object of many to create and foment variance with these minions of the city. I never loved fighting and disturbances for their own sake, and hence could not countenance acts of aggression in any party because it was able to back them. But there are always enough who will, regardless of consequences, as they are of governing principles of right and wrong. This

⁶William J. Barker, ed., *Boldly They Rode* (Lakewood, 1949), a republication of Ovando J. Hollister, *History of the First Regiment of Colorado Volunteers* (Denver, 1863), p. 24.

was too much the case with us at the time and such demonstrations of hostility to the town and to good order as were occasionally made under the *nom de plume* of company Q, calling for interference not only from the police but from our brother cohorts of the barracks, did no credit to our sense or courage.

As the holidays approached the boys began to "scour the country round" to get forage for a big time. On Christmas eve parties might have been seen wending their noiseless way through back alleys, whispering ominously on street corners, or carefully reconnoitering out-houses. One party worked anxiously and assiduously a long time to pick the lock of a hen-roost door that was hung on leather hinges. Another, with great labor and no little risk of detection, carried a forty-gallon barrel of vinegar to the quarters, supposing it to be "rot." Pigs were coaxed and driven to the cook-house door. A pistol would appear at a knot-hole and piggy would disappear at a trap-hole. Eggs, hams, oysters, champagne, cheese and vegetables were the results of the night's foraging. It was rough on the town, but we had been dogs now four months without pay. No money in the company. We couldn't live over Christmas on bread and beef. It already stunk in our nostrils like quails in those of Israel.

Christmas dawned. By breakfast half a dozen were drunk. Mart was caving. The side-walk was altogether too small for him. He transferred the billingsgate of the "hells" to the street. Police appeared on the corners; Mart became more scurrilous than ever; we tried to get him to quarters—no use; word was sent for a patrol. . . .

A little sparring was exchanged, and the citizens gave it up and kindly allowed us to manage our own affairs. The city was lawful "loot," the rest of the week. Everything was gobbled. Beef, mutton, vegetables, wine, cheese and clothing. Loads of hay were sold while the owner was "smiling" with a confederate. The city complained, and no wonder!

We were removed to the barracks. . . . We jayhawked pork, beef and mutton wherever we could successfully. If the company was moved to the barracks to rid the town of it, the action failed of the object. As Major Chivington said, "They only came to camp to get their meals." Whoever failed to get out on the regular pass, failed none the less to pass the sentinels guarding the fold, and proceeding to town, failed not again to take vengeance on their supposed enemies in every way they could think of. . . .

. . . It is over now, and there is no use in hard feelings, but we were not disposed to submit to what we considered the insults of the Denver people. . . .⁷

Slowly events were shaping up which would provide an outlet for the unused energies of the unruly 1st. Meanwhile they occupied themselves by working up resentment against Gibson's *Herald* for an editorial commenting, rather mildly considering the circumstances, on the conduct of the Camp Weld soldiers and some of their officers. A landing

⁷*Ibid.*, pp. 33-36.

squad broke into the *Herald* office, seized the entire stock of newsprint, and happily distributed it to the winds around town. By some quirk of liquored logic the *News* escaped a similar fate even though it was saying things scarcely less uncomplimentary about the regiment.

But there was some action, and many alarms. Hollister says the troops were alerted several times to meet rumors that invading Texans were at the gates of the city. On one occasion the scouting party returned sheepishly to report the invading force was a drove of cattle kicking up a dust on the southern horizon. A Captain McKee, described as an old Texas Indian fighter, was picked up and thrown in the city jail on the charge that he had organized a force of forty partisans and was about to move south with it to join Sibley's army in New Mexico. But the "Secesh party" in Denver was petering out. Mayor Moore, Park McClure, and Charley Harrison all had left. A. B. Miller sought to get out with a wagon train of supplies for the Confederates. The wagons were captured on the plains. The *News* of November 23, 1861, reported that a Rebel supply train and twenty-one men had been seized November 18 near Fort Wise (now Fort Lyon) in the Arkansas Valley. A unit of the 1st was dispatched to bring the prisoners into Denver whence, in due time, they escaped without much difficulty.

The geostrategists of the South had not been idle during these times. They had designed a whole new geography for the North American continent, and it involved lands well above and beyond Mason and Dixon's line.

Colorado mines were producing nearly seven million dollars in new gold for the Philadelphia mint during 1861, even though many of the miners had deserted the placers and shafts to try the roistering army life. The Confederate planners, moreover, were well informed on the divided loyalties in Colorado Territory. Out in California there was gold, too, and a large and influential element, particularly in the southern part of the state, who favored dismemberment of the old Union, which was being run, they said, for the bankers in Boston, New York, and Philadelphia with precious little concern for the needs of a far-distant commonwealth. In New Mexico sentiment was both divided and apathetic. The western end of the territory, present Arizona, had the same complaints of neglect that rankled California and actually set itself up as a secessionist Confederate territory. In New Mexico proper, oriented toward Mexico as it had been for centuries, many citizens took little interest in federal affairs, North or South. The Mormons of Utah Territory, then including present Nevada, had been embittered by several decades of what they considered rough handling by federal authorities. Their empire of Deseret had been invaded and occupied by United States troops, and the Saints had long memories for the religious persecutions which had driven them west from New York to Utah seeking peace, freedom of conscience, and a promised land where

they would be let alone. Even as far north as Oregon there was feeling for secession, though less in sympathy with the Rebel cause than in the conviction that an independent government was needed for the development of the Pacific Slope.

Viewed from the South, all of this added up to strategic opportunity. The entire West with its dazzling new gold and its ports opening on the riches of the China trade could easily be won, it appeared, for the Confederate States. Alternatively, the plans called for sponsorship of an independent Confederacy of the West which would deny to the Union the gold and other Western resources.

Mexico was not omitted from the grand design. The unsettled, financially embarrassed, and volatile state of politics in that young republic seemed to make available, by easy conquest or purchase, the states of Chihuahua, Sonora, and Baja California.

Moreover, there is some evidence that this sort of continental planning was under way long before Beauregard fired on Fort Sumter. During 1860, John B. Floyd, Buchanan's Southern Secretary of War, had moved large stores of arms and other military supplies to small, exposed forts and posts in the Southwest. One major cache was deposited at little Fort Union in northeastern New Mexico. Then Floyd resigned from the cabinet on December 29 in a cloud of treason.

Confirmation of the outlines of the whole plan came in the 1880s when Major Trevanion T. Teel, C.S.A., one of Sibley's officers, wrote his memoirs of the march to the West. If the New Mexico campaign proved successful, he wrote,

. . . negotiations to secure Chihuahua, Sonora and Lower California, either by purchase or by conquest, would be opened; the state of affairs in Mexico made it an easy thing to take those States, and the Mexican President would be glad to get rid of them and at the same time improve his exchequer. In addition to all this, General Sibley intimated that there was a secret understanding between the Mexican and Confederate authorities, and that, as soon as our occupation of the said States was assured, a transfer of those States would be made to the Confederacy. Juarez, the President of the Republic (so called), was then in the City of Mexico with a small army under his command, hardly sufficient to keep him in his position. That date [1862] was the darkest hour in the annals of our sister republic, but it was the brightest of the Confederacy, and General Sibley thought that he would have little difficulty in consummating the ends so devoutly wished by the Confederate Government.

Then, Major Teel went on,

. . . with the enlistment of men from New Mexico, California, Arizona and Colorado, [Sibley would] form an army which would effect the ultimate aim of the campaign, for there were scattered all over the

Western States and Territories Southern men who were anxiously awaiting an opportunity to join the Confederate army; . . . an army of advance would be organized, and "On to San Francisco" would be the watchword. . . .⁸

Up in Denver City rumors about the Confederate designs for the West kept the town tense and jittery. Any day now an advancing horde of murderous Texans might come marching down Cherry Creek. Governor Gilpin, still without funds but still convinced he was doing what had to be done, redoubled his efforts to recruit and equip his 1st Colorados. His "Pet Lambs," he called them, in spite of the street brawling and plundering. Gilpin wrung an authorization out of Washington to dispatch his regiment beyond the territorial boundaries if necessary. It was well known in Denver that the West Pointer Sibley was organizing an army at San Antonio, Texas, for an invasion of the West, and Gilpin wanted Colorado to help counter the move.

Finally word came that Sibley had left San Antonio with a force of thirty-seven hundred rugged Texans. In less than a month he marched his "Army of New Mexico," more generally known as "Sibley's Brigade," nearly a thousand miles across the breadth of Texas. On December 14 he was at Fort Bliss on the Rio Grande near El Paso.

Gilpin hastily organized two independent companies under Captains James H. Ford and Theodore H. Dodd, dispatched them to Fort Garland in southern Colorado's San Luis Valley and then on to New Mexico to reinforce Colonel Edward R. S. Canby, Union commander in the territory.

Sibley moved up New Mexico's Rio Grande Valley in January. Forts Fillmore and Thorn fell to him without opposition. At Valverde, near Fort Craig, on February 21, Canby attempted to meet and halt the invasion with a force of thirty-eight hundred troops and militiamen, including Dodd's company of Coloradans. They were defeated, and Sibley moved north and occupied Albuquerque and Santa Fe, territorial capital.

The rebellion was going well on the faraway left flank of the Confederacy. Canby's forces were now scattered and demoralized. There appeared to be nothing to bar Sibley's way to the Colorado gold fields. Canby sent urgent pleas to Denver City for help as Sibley dispatched a force to the northeast to claim the stores Secretary Floyd had thoughtfully cached at Fort Union, a post Sibley had built not many years before.

In Denver the *News* reported early in January that Sibley was on the move up the Rio Grande, and efforts were made to obtain orders from Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, for the 1st Colorado to move to Canby's assistance. Nearly a month later, February 10, the order finally reached

⁸Quoted in William Clarke Whitford, *Colorado Volunteers in the Civil War* (Denver, 1906), pp. 12-13.

Acting Governor Weld (Gilpin had been called to Washington to explain why he was issuing drafts on the Treasury without authorization):

Send all available forces you can possibly spare to reinforce Colonel Canby, commanding Department of New Mexico, and to keep open his communication through Fort Wise. Act promptly and with all the discretion of your latest information as to what may be necessary and where the troops of Colorado can do most service.

D. [David] Hunter
Major-General, Commanding⁹

The restive 1st now entered upon its day, and, moralists notwithstanding, the months of training in Denver City saloons, the high living on stolen pork, had not sapped the troopers' vitality. Colonel Slough marched south on February 22. A portion of his command, detailed to Fort Wise, set out March 3 to join him. The columns united near present Trinidad on the headwaters of the Purgatoire (which some Coloradans, unable to bend their tongues around the Spanish, have called "Picket-wire" for a century or longer). The full regiment now toiled up the mountain branch of the Santa Fe Trail and over Raton Pass.

It was the same old outfit. The main column helped itself to horses and wagons as it moved down from Denver, and Hollister says his unit from Fort Wise made a commissary of any herd of cattle encountered along the way. But they marched—thirty, forty, or more miles a day at a pace that killed their draft animals. Horses and mules began to drop dead in the harness. On the drag into Maxwell's ranch on the Cimarron the regiment was on the road from sunup to sunup and made sixty-seven miles, for a total of ninety-two in thirty-six hours. Major Chivington's "big grays" were left where they fell, dead.

The 1st reached Fort Union on March 11. It found there a force of about four hundred regulars, many of them survivors of the Valverde disaster. The Coloradans remained at the fort ten days for re-outfitting and daily drilling, and the boys made a merry time of it. A drunken sergeant shot a lieutenant in the face, and a cadre broke into the sutler's cellar to carry off a supply of whiskey, wine, canned fruit, and oysters. On the twenty-second Slough moved on toward Santa Fe by way of Las Vegas and Glorieta Pass, and Hollister says:

About noon we succeeded in getting under way. A party started ahead early to secure the plunder stolen from the sutler last night. A squad of regulars were sent after them, but they had no inclination to interfere with the volunteers and took care to discover nothing. The boys concealed some, drank more, lost and sold the balance. What was drunk immediately under the eyes of the sutler was about all the good

⁹Ibid., p. 75.

they got of it; a doubtful good certainly, for the command was scattered from Dan to Beersheba, burying plunder, drinking, fighting and carousing with Mexican women at the Lome, a small "Sodom" five or six miles from Union. There were a dozen of us too drunk to know friends from foes, consequently most provokingly troublesome. Many came in during the night with rough usage painted on their faces in unmistakable colors. . . .

All the sutlers in New Mexico are traitors at heart. Still they meanly fatten on the government they would destroy. Their property is lawful "loot" to Union soldiers, in my way of thinking.¹⁰

At Las Vegas, temporary seat of the territorial government since Sibley had driven it from Santa Fe, the Firsters scattered through town looking for women and loot. Both were scarce, Hollister reports. The sight of the women, he said, "was more sedative than stimulating," and "if there chanced to be one that by any possible stretch of courtesy could be termed decent, there were enough [soldiers] around her to eat her and then go off with empty stomachs."

Slough's force as he moved down from Fort Union numbered 1342 men. Opposing him were 1100 Texans under Colonel W. R. Scurry, ordered from Santa Fe for what was planned as an easy conquest of Fort Union. Unknown to each other, the two armies marched toward a head-on meeting as they rounded the spur of mountains which separates Santa Fe from the Fort Union country.

On the morning of March 25, Major Chivington was given four hundred men and detailed as advance party to probe ahead. He was to scout and raid, possibly even as far as Santa Fe itself, but he was under strict orders not to precipitate a general engagement. The following day Chivington reached Pigeon's Ranch, so called, according to Whitford, because of its owner's "peculiar style of dancing at parties." A scouting force of twenty Texans was captured and sent to the rear, and then Chivington, although he had now learned that the main enemy force was entering the far end of Gloriéta Pass, pushed on during the afternoon into Apache Cañon.

There, suddenly, he encountered Scurry's advance force of five hundred men under Major Charles L. Pyron. Disregarding his orders to avoid a general action, Chivington attacked. In a fierce three-hour battle of howitzers, cavalry charges, and hand-to-hand fighting, he won the day. Dressed in full regimentals and making a conspicuous target, Chivington rode about the battlefield "with a pistol in each hand and one or two under his arms." One of the Texas officers, taken prisoner, said he emptied his revolver three times at the big major and had his company fire a volley at him. But Chivington galloped unhurt through the bullets.

Pyron fell back toward his main body, then sixteen miles to the rear.

¹⁰Barker, *op. cit.*, pp. 55-56.

He sent a flag of truce to Chivington and an armistice was arranged until 8 A.M. next day to give time for burying the dead and removing the wounded from the field. The Colorados also moved back to water at Pigeon's Ranch. The first engagement of the Battle of La Glorieta had gone to the untested irregulars from Pike's Peak.

Later the *News* would publish a letter written by one of the captured Texans to his wife:

. . . On the twenty-sixth, we got word that the enemy were coming down the canon, in the shape of two hundred Mexicans and about two hundred regulars. Out we marched with two cannon, expecting an easy victory, but what a mistake. Instead of Mexicans and regulars, they were regular demons, that iron and lead had no effect upon, in the shape of Pike's Peakers from the Denver City Gold mines . . . before we could form in line of battle, their infantry were upon the hills, on both sides of us, shooting us down like sheep. . . . They had no sooner got within shooting distance of us, than up came a company of cavalry at full charge, with swords and revolvers drawn, looking like so many flying devils. On they came to what I supposed certain destruction, but nothing like lead or iron seemed to stop them, for we were pouring it into them from every side like hail in a storm. In a moment these devils had run the gauntlet for a half mile, and were fighting hand to hand with our men in the road . . . some of them turned their horses, jumped the ditch, and like demons, came charging on us. It looked as if their horses' feet never touched the ground. . . . Had it not been for the devils from Pike's Peak, this country would have been ours. . . .¹¹

On the twenty-seventh both sides waited tensely for the other to attack, and neither moved from defensive positions. Slough came up with seven hundred men to reinforce Chivington. Scurry had joined Pyron to give the Texans an effective force of about eleven hundred men.

The forces thus would have been approximately equal for the next day's battle had not Slough again decided to divide his command. He ordered Chivington and his four hundred to cross the mountains and attack the enemy's rear. The Colorado commander with his seven hundred then prepared to bear the frontal assault of Scurry's eleven hundred. The battleground was Pigeon's Ranch, at the eastern end of the pass.

The Coloradans and Texans met late in the morning of the twenty-eighth and fought for six or seven hours. Slowly Slough retreated before the superior force, but at 5 P.M. Scurry sent a flag of truce. He had just learned that his supply train had been burned.

Chivington again was the hero of the day. He and his flanking party had made it through the mountains, had fallen upon the lightly guarded

¹¹*Ibid.*, pp. 166-70.

supply train, burned eighty wagons of supplies, bayoneted five hundred horses and mules, and made prisoners of the guard detail.

It had been a bloody day's work for both sides. Nearly one fourth of all the men engaged were casualties.

The Confederates were demoralized. Under cover of the armistice Scurry withdrew.

It was, he reported to Sibley's headquarters, "the hardest contested fight it had ever been my lot to witness." His dispatch continued:

. . . Our brave soldiers, heedless of the storm, pressed on, determined, if possible, to take their battery. A heavy body of infantry, twice our number, interposed to save their guns. Here the conflict was terrible. . . . Inch by inch was the ground disputed, until the artillery of the enemy had time to escape with a number of their wagons. . . . The pursuit was kept up until forced to halt from the extreme exhaustion of the men. . . . [There were] two acts which the most barbarous savage of the plains would blush to own. One was the shooting and dangerously wounding the Rev. L. H. Jones, chaplain of the 4th regiment, with a white flag in his hand; the other an order that the prisoners they had taken be shot in case they were attacked on their retreat. These instances go to prove that they have lost all sense of humanity, in the insane hatred they bear to the citizens of the Confederacy, who have the manliness to arm in defence of their country's independence.¹²

Sibley's retreat from New Mexico began immediately. He withdrew down the Rio Grande, burning his wagons and supplies as he went. The West had been saved for the Union.

Slough and his demonic Pike's Peakers wanted to pursue, but General Canby sent him specific orders to return to Fort Union. The Colorado commander resigned in disgust, and Chivington, hero of Gloriéta, was advanced to the colonelcy in his place. The regiment remained on duty in New Mexico through the rest of the year.

The 1st Colorados cannot be left in New Mexico without a final frank note on their conduct from the future associate editor of the *News*, Ovando Hollister. Camp life became dull. Two of the officers got into a brawl, from which one emerged with a pocketful of the other's whiskers as a souvenir.

Although the Colorado troops stayed on to help chase Sibley back to Texas and then to guard the frontier against possible future attack, the grandiose Confederate plan for the West crashed in ruins on those two March days at Apache Cañon and Pigeon's Ranch. Gone was the hope for a Confederacy that would stretch from sea to shining sea. Shattered the dreams of Colorado and California gold, which Jefferson Davis had seen both as direct support for his shaky economy and as enticement

¹²Colonel W. R. Scurry to Major A. M. Jackson, Mar. 31, 1862; quoted in Henry Steele Commager, *The Blue and the Gray* (one-volume ed., Indianapolis-New York, 1950), pp. 404-6.

for foreign loans. And there would be no Pacific ports to help ease the tightening Union naval blockade.

Large speculative structures can be raised, and have been, on the premise that the relatively small, far-isolated engagement at La Gloriéta was a key battle in the nation's tragic division. The speculations rest entirely on ifs. But opportunity was there when Sibley marched west, and it ended among the rocks, piñons, and scrub cedars of a shallow cañon on the old trail to Santa Fe. The South attempted no further operations of a regular nature in the Far West.

There were a couple of irregular ones still to come, and both have juncture with the story of Denver and the *News*. One was a mixture of banditry and Southern patriotism, with probably more of the one than the other, and the second involves as barbaric an episode as ever gave the Great Plains a dark name for violence.

Jim Reynolds and his eight raiders may have been Confederate guerrillas, but larceny seems to have been the principal sentiment in their hearts as they came up the Arkansas Valley and into South Park late in July of 1864. They claimed they were out to raid gold for the South and that they had got sixty-three thousand dollars of it from a wagon train in New Mexico. The flyleaf of Reynolds' pocket diary did carry an oath which the gang presumably had sworn to:

I do solemnly swear or affirm that I will bear true allegiance to the Confederate States of America and the President and all officers appointed over me, so help me God. I further swear that I will aid or assist all true southern men and their families wherever they may be at a reasonable risk of my life whether in the army or out of it. I furthermore swear that I will not reveal, divulge or cause to be divulged any of the grips, signs, passwords or proceedings of the order, except to those who have been regularly initiated or to whom it may by right belong, and if I should be so vile as to violate this my solemn oath or obligation I shall be taken and hung by the neck until I am dead, dead, dead, and my bones left on the plains to bleach as unworthy of burial.¹³

The Reynolds gang started its Colorado operations by robbing a lonely traveler in South Park of a hundred dollars and the stagecoach, near Hamilton, of some three thousand dollars. Kenneth Englert, authority on the notorious "Reynolds Raid", believes this was the total extent of the gang's "take," at least in Colorado, but rumors that the sixty-three thousand dollars is buried somewhere in the mountains touched off a long-time treasure hunt which still sends some people searching the forests and glens around the headwaters of the South Platte.

A Paul Revere in the form of William H. Berry, traveling subscription

¹³*Rocky Mountain News*, Aug. 13, 1864.

agent in South Park for the *Rocky Mountain News*, raced through the mountains and then on down to Denver to spread the alarm that Colorado had been invaded by Rebel guerrillas. Berry dashed ahead of the gang for a time, then stalked them, finally got himself captured. He was released in time to speed on into Denver a little after noon on July 26. He made the deadline for the afternoon edition, and the *News* sounded the alarm.

Several civilian posses and two cavalry companies hit the trail to track down the guerrillas, who were boasting at roadhouses that they had served with Quantrill and that they had in mind sweeping down on Denver, robbing the banks, and setting fire to the town. Denver was going to get what Lawrence, Kansas, got, they said.

Finally one of the gang was shot dead from ambush, a posseman got an accidental rifle bullet through both thighs, and another of the raiders was captured alive. On threat of peremptory lynching, he led the pursuers to a rendezvous where five of the band, including Jim Reynolds, were captured. Three got away and were chased two hundred and twenty miles in two days into the mountains of New Mexico, where the trail was lost. The five captives were taken to Denver and, a secret military "trial" and ordered moved to Fort Wise. A company of the 3rd Colorado Cavalry started south with them, but on upper Cherry Creek near the old gold-rush town of Russellville all five prisoners were shot "trying to escape." Dick Wootton happened by the spot later and said he found three skeletons lashed upright against trees with bullet holes in their skulls.¹⁴

The only other known Confederate guerrilla pass at Colorado Territory didn't reach the border, but it had some distinguished personnel: W. Park McClure and the banished Charley Harrison. After he left Denver, McClure became a captain in the Confederate Army and served with General Sterling Price on his raids through Missouri. Charley Harrison became one of the ranking leaders of bushwhacker bands in southern Kansas, Missouri, Arkansas, and Indian Territory. He carried the rank of lieutenant colonel in Colonel Emmett MacDonald's Confederate 4th Missouri Cavalry, and reports praise him for fearlessness and gallantry in action.

Harrison persuaded his superiors that a long-distance raid into Colorado Territory would be feasible and profitable. The raiders could capture arms, mules, wagons, federal mail, maybe some gold. There was also a possibility of recruits from among Southern sympathizers still in the West. At minimum, such a raid would cause confusion and strike fear in the hearts of Union forces. Moreover there was nothing to obstruct the raiders between the Missouri and Denver City but a few Plains Indians.

¹⁴For a full account of the affair see Kenneth E. Englert, "Raids by Reynolds," *The Denver Westerners' Brand Book*: 1956, pp. 151ff.

The ex-gambler organized his force at Center Creek, Missouri, and one of the first volunteers turned out to be his old friend Park McClure. The party of twenty picked raiders, many of them cavalry officers with Western experience, set out on May 16.

The Osage Indians at this time had been driven north into Kansas by Texas and Arkansas guerrillas, and their resentment of such treatment took the form of loyalty to the Union. They assigned themselves the task of intercepting Confederate efforts to rouse the Plains Indians against Union settlements. Some of the Osages enlisted for scouting duty. One of the Osage bands under Little Bear was on the Verdigris River near Humboldt in southeastern Kansas. Little Bear and his braves met the Harrison party at Lightning Creek with rifles, tomahawks, lances, and arrows.

Park McClure went down with the war hatchet of an eighteen-year-old brave, Gra-tah-more, embedded in his skull to the haft. Harrison was shot in the face and rolled to the ground from his saddle. On his knees, still firing, he shot a charging Indian through the chest. Then he was overwhelmed in a wave of naked red bodies, and razor-sharp skinning knives flashed. Only two of the Confederate band got away, and the Osages left no wounded survivors on the field.

The eighteen bodies were mutilated. The heads of some were chopped off. Others were scalped. Charley Harrison's dark hair by this time was thinning on top, and the Osages instead counted *coup* on his handsome black beard. Investigating troopers from Humboldt a few days later saw the beard-scalp hanging as a totem on a lance in front of an Osage lodge. They also found Harrison's body, but it had no face.¹⁵

So ends the story of Denver's most glamorous badman. And Charley had his jury waiting for him; he had killed the twelfth man in Leavenworth before he took up authorized killing as a soldier.

¹⁵William L. Bartles and Thomas Moshier, "Massacre of Confederates by the Osages," *The Osage Magazine*, Feb. and May 1910; quoted by Zamonski, *op. cit.*, pp. 103-14.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Massacre at Sand Creek

WILLIAM GILPIN was sure the war in the Far West had vital bearing on the fate of the Union. So much so that he felt he had direct access to the United States Treasury in financing his efforts to defend his new territory and keep Colorado gold out of Dixie. No one had given him the slightest encouragement in the belief, but it was characteristic of the man that this was no impediment. With sweeping executive vigor he undertook what is probably the most casual, and impersonal, raid ever made on federal funds. There was no thought of private gain. He was striking a blow for the Union when he issued, in mounting numbers, his personally autographed drafts on the Treasury Department. Money was needed to recruit and equip men for the service of their country, *ergo*, their country should provide the cash. Gilpin, as territorial governor, represented the might of the nation over all these plains and mountains. So he signed the chits. It was as simple as that.

When Gilpin arrived the territorial treasury was as barren as the prairies he had crossed by coach. In fact there *was* no treasury; Coloradans had not been introduced to the privilege of paying taxes on a regular basis. Gilpin had to start from zero, with a war on, with all the disquieting rumors drifting in more and more frequently that the Johnny Rebs were about to sally north from Texas in force. So the "Gilpin drafts" became legal tender, temporarily, in Denver stores, warehouses, and banks, and the roistering 1st Colorado was born. Not everyone conceded that the silver-tongued new governor was morally justified in reaching into the country's pocket this way, though no one had any doubt of its illegality. The *News* eyed the process with a good deal of conservative reservation and promptly got to trading blows with Gibson's *Herald* on the issue. The *Herald* went all the way with the governor. The financing, instead of being "impractical" as the *News* said it was, actually was the soul of practicality. What else could the poor man do? the *Herald* argued. He had been given Denver and the West to defend; he had to have funds.

The first territorial legislators were not much help. Individually and collectively they were as broke as Gilpin was. The general assembly was likely to meet wherever lodging was cheapest and board most generous and inexpensive. Moreover, then as now, there was resentment by the country legislators of Denver's size and status as regional metropolis.

So the legislature became, by its own fiat, a migratory body. The first territorial assembly met in Denver beginning September 9, 1861, but it voted on November 5 to designate Colorado City as capital and site of its next session. Colorado City was at the very foot of Pike's Peak and long since has been swallowed up by Colorado Springs. When time came for the second meeting, however, the legislators decided they couldn't meet: no cash in the till for salaries. It could have appropriated its own pay, but there was nothing to appropriate from. The session was postponed until July 7, 1862, when the legislators finally gathered at their own expense in Colorado City. A trial of four days was enough for that rustic little log-cabin town; facilities were inadequate. The assemblymen adjourned to meet in Denver City on July 11. Subsequently, beginning in 1864, the capital shuttled back and forth between Golden City and Denver, and it was not until December 9, 1867, that a decree permanently designating Denver as the capital was adopted. Strangely, the one town in the territory which rivaled Denver in size and importance, Central City, never made a successful bid for capital honors. Along the way the legislature-on-horseback paused long enough to designate the *News* as its official paper. Column upon column of proceedings, minutes, and verbatim bills and acts appear during these years. Tastes in political reporting in those days ran to the precise text, however ponderous and interminable. The electorate apparently was impressed by and demanded to see all the whereases and now-therefore-let-it-be-resolveds.

Gilpin appears to have been not much concerned about the comings and goings of his general assembly, nor overly interested in what it did. He viewed his task as primarily military, and set up his government on that basis. He was busy recruiting his "Pet Lambs," finagling arms for them, and studying reports on Sibley's well-known hostile intentions. His drafts on the treasury were willingly accepted by Denver merchants and suppliers during the summer of 1861, and Denver felt very much a part of the Union as it girded. The *News* began to run a woodcut of the Star-Spangled Banner at the head of its editorial column.

By fall, however, the first of the drafts had reached Washington, and eyebrows in the hard-pressed Treasury Department bounced off the ceiling. Payment of the scrip was instantly refused. Dispatches came through inquiring of Gilpin, in effect but in politer language, whatinhell he thought he was up to.

Dishonoring of the drafts was a stiff blow to the entire Denver economy. They were circulating freely as currency, each holder endorsing the paper on to the next. A financial pyramid had been built on confidence that Gilpin knew what he was doing and would be sustained. The town had a population, according to an enumeration by Deputy Marshal N. Otis, of only 2477 persons.¹ The *News* patriotically

¹*Rocky Mountain News*, June 24, 1861.

claimed this was short by at least two thirds, but if the truth of the matter lay somewhere in between, Denver still was scarcely more than a crossroads village. Into this village Gilpin had poured, within the space of a few months, some \$375,000 worth of scrip.

When the first drafts began arriving back from Washington marked "worthless," chaos took over. Scarcely a business in town was untouched. The collapse was total, and Denver plunged into a winter of depression, hardship, and want. Gilpin, who had been so proudly welcomed with flying flags and booming cannon, now was bitterly denounced. He was summoned to Washington to account for his blithe ways with the public treasury, and Lincoln's cabinet, faced with a thousand matters more pressing, had to take time out to inquire into the bursting of a bubble far out beyond the western horizon. Gilpin was removed, effective April 19, 1862. Eventually a small portion of his drafts was honored. A paymaster was sent out, and any original draft-holder who could prepare an itemized and verified bill for his goods or services got paid. The drafts themselves, however, never were recognized, and since many of them had passed through a number of hands by endorsement and could not be thrown back to the original holders, most banks, businessmen, and private citizens were left holding an empty bag. Smiley says:

. . . Public feeling against him [Gilpin] here became of extreme bitterness and he was assailed upon every hand by the exasperated and impoverished holders of his drafts. As an old army officer he was held to have known the government's rigid financial methods, and it was principally because of his assumed authority that the people had unquestioningly accepted his irregular and unauthorized drafts. . . . But, through all the trouble no one questioned Governor Gilpin's integrity, the purity of his purpose, the loftiness of his patriotism, or the sincerity of his zeal to protect the people from invasion, and to serve them to the best of his ability. He was in many ways a visionary man whose mind and thoughts were often far above the practical affairs of every-day life; and when that emergency came his enthusiasm for the Union overshadowed all other things. Notwithstanding the unfortunate results that grew out of his methods of financing his military preparations, the people of Denver and of Colorado were immeasurably indebted to him for the promptness, vigor and earnestness with which he prepared for war.²

To succeed Gilpin, Lincoln chose another of his close friends, John Evans of Illinois. Evans, a physician-financier, was a man of prominence in the Midwest. He had been one of the organizers of the Republican party in Illinois and had helped win the nomination for the man from Springfield. He was founder of Chicago's suburban Evanston and of Northwestern University there. As a physician he was a pioneer in

²Smiley, *History of Denver*, pp. 379-80.

humanizing care of the mentally ill, occupied a professorship for eleven years in the old Rush Medical College at Chicago, and was the first to demonstrate the contagious nature of cholera. As a financier he made a fortune building and dealing in Midwestern railroads. Lincoln had wanted him to take the governorship of Washington Territory in 1861 but he had declined.

Evans came to Denver in the spring of 1862 as a man of great wealth and a figure of towering prestige and authority. For the rest of his life, which ended in 1897, he dominated Denver and Colorado affairs. With Byers, he was one of the founders of the University of Denver, and he built railroads, ran banks, joined the *News* editor in mining ventures, owned traction firms, real estate, and a wide variety of businesses. Always a devout Methodist, he poured much of his great and growing wealth into the pioneer churches of Denver. Financier, statesman, and philanthropist, Evans was one of the chief architects of Colorado's development. A son-in-law, Samuel H. Elbert, also became a Colorado governor, and Evans's descendants remain today one of Denver's most wealthy and influential families, the pivot of "old guard" maneuvers on Seventeenth Street.

John Evans was not a man to be opposed or thwarted, and he seldom was. But his one conspicuous failure was to win a seat in the U. S. Senate. The name of the dominant peak looking down on Denver was changed in his honor. Streets, chapels, and towns were named for him, and in the era of rich men which would come to Denver he would be one of the richest. Only the Senate escaped him, and it was not because his reverent fellow citizens denied him the distinction. Evans resigned from the governor's chair in 1865 to run for the senatorship after Colorado voters had narrowly ratified a proposed state constitution. He was elected. But President Johnson decided there were not yet enough people in Colorado to form a new state, and he vetoed the enabling act.

The *Trinidad News* once contrasted the personal appearance and demeanor of Evans with those of another prominent Denver resident:

Governor Evans owns the South Park railroad—is worth a million dollars in Colorado and a quarter of a million in Chicago, and yet Professor Goldrick, the Adonis of the Rocky Mountain Herald, wears the best clothes, smokes the finest cigars, looks the most like a millionaire on the street, and enjoys what there is in life. Stocks may go up; Evans may go down, but Goldrick goes on forever.³

Smiley passed judgment in comparing Evans with Gilpin:

. . . Governor Gilpin was an honest, brilliant man, but his tastes, inclinations and life-training unfitted him to deal with the political

³Undated clipping, Denver Public Library.

and other conditions he found here; and the kind of executive ability he possessed was that of a military commander and not that of the successful head of a civil government. His personal character was far beyond reproach. Governor Evans was a different type of man—one of the great Captains in civil life, a projector, an organizer, a man with the ability to conceive and execute great undertakings among the people. But his administration was subordinated to political ends. His ambitions were divided between two great purposes; one was to quickly develop Colorado resources by railroads, wagon roads, irrigation and other internal improvements; the other was to enter the United States Senate from the new State he had in view when he came here. Therefore, his administration was bent, swayed and influenced by his political aims. In fulfilling his other purpose, the efforts of no other man produced results comparable with those growing out of his energy, far-sightedness and remarkable ability for organizing and carrying forward great enterprises. . . .⁴

Hubert Bancroft, as he organized his notes for his *History of Nevada, Colorado and Wyoming* in 1884, was specifically uncomplimentary:

. . . About ex-Governor Evans and his son-in-law Judge Elbert there is much humbug. They are cold-blooded mercenary men, ready to praise themselves and each other profusely, but who have in reality but little patriotism. I never met a railroad man who was not the quintessence of meanness in more particulars than one. . . .⁵

Whatever the verdict, John Evans rapidly became one of Colorado's most prominent and forceful leaders. There is very little in the nineteenth-century progress of the state which does not have his name attached to it in some way.

Editor Byers and the new governor soon were intimates. They shared the same political convictions. Both had visions of what Denver and Colorado might become. One had and the other aspired to wealth and distinction, and both were in positions of leadership. Evans became a partner with Byers and Dailey in numerous mining enterprises. As has been noted, the flooded-out Byers family was taken in by the Evanses and sheltered following the Great Deluge in the ugly, boxlike house which was the gubernatorial mansion of 1864. There is circumstantial evidence to indicate that Evans generously dipped into his well-lined pockets to help his young editor friend get back on his feet after the flood.

Evans bought one of the Byers homes and lived in it for the rest of his life. (A previous Byers house had stood atop the bluff on the site at East Colfax Avenue and Sherman Street where a third annex to the

⁴Smiley, *History of Denver*, pp. 493-94.

⁵Bancroft ms. L-13.

Colorado Capitol currently is being completed. Byers had wanted a house placed where he could see the mountains from every window.) The Byers-Evans mansion, quaint and blocky and with a cast-iron widow's walk, still stands at West Thirteenth Avenue and Bannock Street. When Governor Evans died there, Mrs. Byers was one of those in attendance. It was typical of Lib Byers to write that she "never saw a more beautiful death."

As Evans came to power in Denver the *News* was going through its hectic era of kidnap, fire, and flood, somehow landing right side up after each. Byers soon put his paper as staunchly behind the Evans administration as the *Herald* had been behind Gilpin's. Following the flood, Byers did not long remain in the plant of the old *Commonwealth*, which Evans may have helped him purchase. Byers and Dailey took over the *Commonwealth* late in June of 1864. A month later, on July 26, they were in Murdock's frame building on Larimer Street in Denver City. The site was on the west side of the block two doors north from F (now Fifteenth) Street, a location today occupied by the soiled old Railroad Building and numbered 1515 Larimer.

Larimer had become the main street of the town, and the *News* now was in the center of civic bustle. Byers, as usual, was a busy man. He took over the postmastership on November 7, 1864, and held office for two years. He also was searching the mountains for likely claims, climbing peaks, fishing for trout, berrying and raising experimental crops on his river ranch. The telegraph line had arrived, and the *News* was publishing in the modern manner.

But Denver still was an outpost, an island village totally surrounded by prodigious distances and savage Indians.

The fast-flying rumors of imminent Confederate invasion and, finally, the turned-back attempt excited the town and gave its citizens a sense of participation in the great events which were wrenching the nation. The *News* published numerous extras when word got through, days late, of the great battles and maneuvers of the war.

But Denver really was less worried about distant Rebels than nearby Indians, and where redskins were concerned, the town, viewed from the safe distance of a century, seems to have been positively paranoid. It is easy to shrug off other men's perils, but pioneer Denver, on the record, reacted to Indians like a troop of Boy Scouts scaring themselves with scalping stories around a campfire. The town jumped at every shadow, indulged itself frequently in high moments of wild alarm, shocked itself into delicious terrors with unverified reports of bloody outrages—some of them as far away as Minnesota and Nevada. Any killing, no matter how distant, was a "massacre," and represented an immediate threat to Denver's continued existence.

The story of the Indian troubles of the early sixties makes a dark chapter in the history of Denver and the *Rocky Mountain News*, and

both share a large measure of responsibility for precipitating the actual Indian wars which followed in the late sixties and seventies. Then, indeed, the plains ran with blood—mostly Indian—and the hard-pressed, much-maligned United States Cavalry would have to fight more than two hundred engagements to force the tribes into submission. They were not always honorable fights—and neither was Sand Creek, which started it all.

Probably the wars would have had to come anyway, sooner or later. The trail of broken promises, mistreatment, and systematic debasement was too long, with too many malignantly twisted turnings, to be retraced. There is scarcely a clean page in the whole record of white dealings with the American red man, and it fell to Denver's lot to come into existence at that historical moment when the pent-up forces of retribution reached a crisis. The little capital of Colorado Territory, self-important and self-indulgent as cities always are, arrived just in time to tamp in the wadding and light the fuse. It was not only that the Indian was being encircled, displaced, and starved to death, but he also was being consistently and uniformly cheated at every step of the way by Christian gentlemen with fiercely moral philosophies of private gain.

The Indian need not be idealized as a "noble savage." His traditions often were cruel and sanguine. It was his practice to mutilate the fallen foeman, and he tortured both himself, in ritual dances and ceremonials, and any captive enemy. Captured women, white or bronze of skin, often became community property. Neither Indian male nor female understood such stubborn moral sophistications as are clothed in the phrase "death before dishonor." And the rape sometimes was accomplished by spread-eagling the victim, naked and bound, to pegs driven into prairie sod. White men on occasion were similarly picketed in anthills and abandoned to go blind under the powerful sun, or mad, or both, before merciful death arrived. There is at least one record of the building of a fire over the genitals of a spread-eagled victim. The Plains Indian could be a formidable and terrifying enemy.

Yet his patience in the face of decades of provocation seems now to have been as superhuman as his cruelties were subhuman. Certainly the forbearance and wisdom exhibited by the "peace chiefs," who saw the shape of things to come, towers in retrospect over that of the white men from Denver who slaughtered them and their bands with a blood-thirstiness which would have awed a Comanche. Yet the chieftains were savages, and the leader of the whites a Methodist elder.

Denver saw little Indian barbarity during its first years, although it heard much and imagined worse. Arapahoes, Cheyennes, and Utes camped often in the Platte bottoms or passed through to wage their wars against each other at a distance. Denver never was subjected to Indian attack, but its citizens proclaimed often and noisily that a raid was imminent. The red men who visited town came to trade, see the strange

sights, get drunk, or beg, and in the latter two activities they frequently must have been confounded nuisances. They also were light-fingered, and to a culture which justified the lynch noose for horse stealing, this was cardinal sinning. It did not matter that the Indians had an ignorant custom by which a brave won honor and dignity in proportion to his skill at acquiring other men's ponies. Moreover one Indian was about as bad as another; though of course it was white "Bummers" who maltreated the Indians and always "good" whites who were massacred by them in retaliation.

The Indian also was being casually debauched with firewater. His rapidly acquired taste for whiskey made him an easy mark at trading sessions, and full advantage was taken of the weakness. The *News* early had hurled a vigilante threat at those who traded or sold liquor to Indians, and later a reporter tells, with what seems to be genuine compassion, of seeing a drunken brave sloshing and stumbling up a Denver street clutching his stark naked, starving, but unwhimpering son by the hand. There is no evidence that either the paper's thundering or its pity was effective. The *News* also seems to have partaken somewhat of Jim Beckwourth's ire at the rape of the Indian women in their lodges beside the Platte by drunken whites but, like the rest of Denver, it dropped the issue once things calmed down again. The frontier and its press had a double standard on such matters. The violation of squaws was unfortunate, of course, but, well, boys will be boys when they're in their cups. Rape as applied by red men to white women, however, was intolerable.

There seems to have been a lot of inexpensive pride involved in some of the noisiest of the outrages. An examination of contemporary reports discloses that, besides thievery, the item of Indian misconduct which most frequently offended the settlers was bronze boldness and a want of deference to those whose skin was obviously of a superior hue. And the Indian's arrogance in begging and stealing almost matched that of the white men who had established themselves and built their settlements, wholly in violation of treaty, on tribal lands.

As an example, there is the case of Denton Shook, who got hit on the head.⁶ A party of a hundred Cheyennes were camped in South Park near Hamilton, and some of them went begging for food at the ranch of Robert Stubbs. The rancher and Denton and Peter Shook gave them some, but they wanted more and began to take it. In a struggle over a side of bacon Denton took a blow on the head and hit back. The foraging Indians then departed but returned with a force of sixty braves who began shooting arrows into the Stubbs cabin. Then they invaded the house. The seven women present saved Peter Shook from being dragged off "by encircling his body with their arms. (Who wouldn't be the young man? *Ed. News.*)" The feminine phalanx turned the trick, and the

⁶*Rocky Mountain News*, July 22 and 23, 1862.

Cheyennes moved on to scenes where begging was less complex and women didn't interfere in man's work.

The *News*, however, demanded blood for the incident. "Such outrages," it commented, "have gone quite far enough; it is time the redskins learned to behave themselves; they are paving the way for extermination faster than nature requires, and need another General Harney to 'regulate' them. . . ." (Colonel William S. Harney in 1855 had attacked a Sioux village at Ash Hollow near the forks of the Platte and slaughtered men, women, and children.)

A year earlier the *News* had approached the matter more calmly:

THE INDIANS.

It is sincerely to be hoped that our citizens, in all their intercourse with the Indians, will be guided by that prudence and discretion which promotes friendly and peaceful relations. A civilized and enlightened people can well afford to remember that the tribes by which we are surrounded are our inferiors physically, morally, mentally, and that the commission of what we call crimes, assumes with them the merit of bravery and manly action. In all our dealings with these untutored barbarians, we should be governed by the greatest caution—avoiding in all cases a disposition to overreach and deceive them. They are naturally, and not without reason, suspicious of their white brethren. They feel that their rights have been invaded, their hunting grounds taken possession of, and their possessions appropriated without adequate remuneration. It should be the aim of every good citizen to conciliate the Indians, and show them by a peaceful policy, that we are not committed to an aggressive and tyrannous [sic] course.

But at the same time, when the necessity arises, they should be taught the importance of maintaining an orderly and quiet bearing, and if needs be, convinced that the whites have the will and the power to punish those who commit outrages upon us. When that necessity arises, we should proceed moderately, and yet firmly. Rash and intemperate and ill-directed attack upon the Indians, would involve us in difficulties and dangers, from which it might be impossible to extricate ourselves. We must not forget that the whites are in a measure responsible for the commission of Indian outrages. Liquor has been furnished contrary to law not only, but in defiance of the inevitable consequences which always follow the use of "firewater" by these savage tribes. Under its influence we have no doubt acts of violence have been committed, which otherwise never would have been committed. Let an effort be made to suppress the liquor traffic with the Indians. There is a stringent United States law against it, and we hope our citizens will aid and cooperate with Col. [A. G.] Boone [son of Daniel Boone and then Indian agent for the Denver area], in his efforts to enforce that law. In this way we are confident troubles may be avoided which otherwise will assume a serious and formidable shape.

In this connection we take occasion to enter our formal protest against recent efforts in certain quarters to influence the public mind against the Indians. The peace of our community should not be jeopardized in order that a few indiscreet and turbulent spirits may gain a little notoriety. We have an Indian agent in our midst, whose advice and warning will have ten-fold more effect than the frothy declamation of a few who are "spoiling for a muss" with the Indians.⁷

In an adjacent column the *News* further indicated its displeasure by putting the caption "White Barbarians" over a letter to the editor complaining of an "element whose chief ambition seems to be to debauch the squaws, and sell or swop" whiskey to the braves.

Within the next four years, however, the *News* would abandon nearly every item of its own sensible advice. These were the last words of "prudence and discretion" it would address to the "Indian question."

The *News* moved full circle and went clamoring into the camp of those who were "spoiling for a muss." And Byers knew better. As a trailsman to Oregon in '52, when the West was much more trackless than it now was, he had acquired experience with Indians, and it had been peaceful experience. During his years in Omaha he had participated in treaty councils with the eastern Nebraska tribes. He had seen how Indians had rescued and fed starving fifty-niners who struck out across the plains to Pike's Peak with sails full of hope and no cargo of either knowledge or provisions. Byers knew that the Indian was, or could have been, tractable. But politics, personalities, and community emotional jags robbed him of his judgment, and he and his paper embarked on a shameless course of pandering to alarms from which there was no retreat.

There was provocation, too, of course. The Indians *were* raiding, scalping, and killing. They at last had understood that they were being hemmed in, driven, and harried toward extermination, and they were fighting back. Word of barbaric raids on exposed outposts not too distant must have been a disquieting experience for even the most levelheaded Denver citizen of the sixties. The course the *News* took, if it cannot be justified in the long view, nonetheless can be readily understood. Nor was its attitude unique; newspapers everywhere on the fringes of the plains were demanding punishment of the Indians. For better or worse, the journals spoke for their orphan communities, even if they failed to guide them through the strong currents of fear and anger as an idealized press is supposed to do.

The sporadic raiding and pillaging began to reach serious proportions in the summer of 1862. It mounted in 1863 as Governor Evans arrived to take his post, and by 1865 the prairie was aflame, touched off by the success of a wild pack of Colorado volunteers in outdoing the Indian

⁷Ibid., Apr. 23, 1861.

in vicious savagery. These were Civil War years, of course, and nineteenth-century writers, seeking any explanation other than that the Indian finally was reacting to being dispossessed of his homeland, tried to attribute the growing tribal restiveness to a vast plot hatched to take advantage of the nation's preoccupation with its fraternal war. The effort doesn't come off. It doesn't square with Indian ways. Those who knew the red warrior best—seasoned cavalry officers among them—conceded that he could be an excellent tactician in battle, but there is no hint he was a strategist in the grand manner. Had he been, the history of the whole North American continent might have been written much differently.

There is some evidence that Confederate agents sent Southern Indians up from Arkansas and Indian Territory to stir up the plains tribes, but their influence was minor if effective at all. The grievances and pressures were so great that *provocateurs* were unnecessary. Moreover the tribes, at this time, were not waging that kind of organized warfare. Small bands and warrior clans such as the Cheyennes' implacable "Dog Soldiers" were ranging about hitting at targets of opportunity: isolated ranches, lightly guarded wagon trains, and the coveted horse and mule strings at stage relay stations.

Denver felt itself much exposed to such maraudings. The 1st Colorado Regiment was still in New Mexico and would not have its triumphant homecoming until January 1863. The 2nd Colorado Regiment was organized in the summer of 1862, but in August moved down to Fort Lyon and then on to Indian Territory and Kansas, not to return to Denver until it had helped run Sterling Price's sixteen thousand Rebels out of Missouri in 1864. The city now sorely missed the ribald rioters from Camp Weld; it had no force to send against the pillagers on the plains. The Indians had not begun to kill yet, but as early as June 16, 1862, the *News* was getting nervous:

PROSPECT OF INDIAN TROUBLES.

Indian affairs in our Territory are in anything else but a desirable state, just at this time. A growing animosity to the white settlers is manifest in the disposition of our immediate neighbors, the Arapahoes and Cheyennes. . . .

Governor Evans arrived May 16 and in July obtained from the legislature a law authorizing the enrollment of militiamen. The militia was not organized immediately, but the army designated Colorado a military district and placed Colonel Chivington in charge of it. Chivington had resigned his command with the 1st in New Mexico and returned home to receive adulation as the "Hero of Gloriéta." On the strength of his popularity he was preparing to run for Congress.

The Indians in October ran off the horses and mules at several stage stations on the Santa Fe Trail and then remained quiet until the following March, when they made a similar raid on settlements along the Cache la Poudre north of Denver. No blood was spilled in either encounter. To that point, there had been more men killed in Denver City saloons than in Indian warfare, but the citizens were jittery. During 1863, Governor Evans kept the mails busy and the new telegraph line hot in a voluminous correspondence with Washington complaining of the tribal "uprising" and warning of worse to come. In October, however, he conceded that while there had been some depredations by scattered bands, acting independently, the tribes to the north and east of Denver now were quiet and there was no talk of war.⁸ Denver continued to talk of a vast confederation of savages being organized to wipe out the white man in the West.

The following spring real trouble actually began. A detachment of the 1st Colorado, now a cavalry regiment, went out on the plains east of Denver looking for cattle reported stolen but possibly strayed. The troop was spoiling for a fight and, when it didn't get one, plundered and burned the lodges of two small Cheyenne villages from which the Indians had fled before them.⁹

About the same time another unit of the 1st was scouting down the South Platte and got into a fight with a small band of fifteen Southern Cheyenne warriors at Frémont's Orchard over possession of four mules. Two troopers were fatally wounded. Shortly thereafter, late in April, a rancher was killed. A detachment under Major Jacob Downing took to the road to avenge the deaths. He found a camp of Cheyennes in Cedar Cañon, a hundred and forty miles down the Platte, and attacked at sunrise. George Bird Grinnell, who knew the Cheyennes probably better than any other white man, says it was a friendly village. "These people did not know that there had been any trouble with whites; the men were away and only old women and children were in the camp."¹⁰ Downing claimed twenty-six Indians were killed and thirty wounded, but didn't mention age or sex. He lost one man. Years later he told the *News* he had located the "hostile" camp by capturing a passing Indian and "toasting his shins" over a small fire.

By June, Denver had worked itself into full-blown hysteria. Reports came that masses of Indians were advancing on the city from the east and north. Denver was to be sacked and burned. Governor Evans slapped a 6:30 P.M. curfew on all business houses and ordered every able-bodied man to assemble daily for drill. Blockhouses and log fortifications were thrown up at the fringes of the town. On June 15

⁸*Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs* (Washington, 1863), p. 129.

⁹George Bird Grinnell, *The Fighting Cheyennes* (Norman, 1956), pp. 138-40.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, p. 143.

the supposed horde was firmly declared to be just a few miles from the city, and women and children were gathered into the brick business houses in the central district for protection. Next day it was all over. Someone bothered to ascertain that there was no huge force of redskins just over the horizon.

There was a small band of angry Cheyennes buzzing about nearby. They ran off some stock on Coal Creek, ten miles to the northwest, then looped around the city and paid a bloody visit to the lonely ranch of Isaac P. Van Wormer, twenty-five miles east on Running Creek. Van Wormer's tenant, Nathan P. Hungate, and a hired man named Miller were out caring for their stock on June 18 when they saw the ranch buildings in flames. Miller set out immediately for Denver, and Hungate headed for the ranch house, where his wife, Ellen, and two blonde daughters, Florence, six, and Laura, three, had been left alone.

In Denver, Miller notified Van Wormer of the raid, and the ranch owner, unable to persuade any volunteers to go with him, set out by himself in a buckboard. He found Hungate's mutilated body, eighty bullets in it, some distance from the charred house. The bodies of the wife and children, also mutilated, had been stuffed into a shallow well. Roman Nose, a Northern Cheyenne chief who had been regarded as friendly, was blamed.

Bodies of the Hungate family were brought to Denver and placed on public exhibition in a downtown store. Everyone in town crowded around to see the grisly display.¹¹ From that day forward Denver was of one mind: exterminate all Indians.

Governor Evans sent a circular to the Indians, calling upon those who wished to be regarded as friendly to come in and camp near military posts where they could be watched. The Cheyennes and Arapahoes were to go to Fort Lyon in the Arkansas Valley, the Kiowas and Comanches to Fort Larned, farther down the river in Kansas.

Then, on August 10, the *News* carried his proclamation calling all Colorado Territory to arms:

APPEAL TO THE PEOPLE.

Patriotic citizens of Colorado:—

I again appeal to you to organize for the defense of your homes and families against the merciless savages. . . .

Let every settlement organize its volunteer militia company for its defense. . . .

Any man who kills a hostile Indian is a patriot; but there are Indians who are friendly, and to kill one of these will involve us in greater difficulty. . . .

Jno. Evans

¹¹Elmer R. Burkey, "The Hungate Massacre," *Colorado Magazine*, Vol. XII, No. 4 (July 1935).

Three days later the governor announced he had won permission from the Secretary of War for enlistment of a volunteer cavalry regiment for one hundred days to fight the Indians. The 3rd Colorado Regiment came into being.

Denver was under martial law all summer. Twelve of the *News* printers, including John Dailey, joined the 3rd, so decimating the staff that Byers persuaded the regimental officers to detail a squad of compositors back to him in order to get the paper out. Some issues contained little but military orders and reports, with some Civil War news thrown in whenever the telegraph line was open.

Indian raiding continued at widely separated points, and although there were no real battles it was enough to slow plains travel virtually to a standstill. Supply trains came through on the Platte road only at irregular and widely spaced intervals. The telegraph line was frequently cut. Mail arrived by way of Panama and California.

Supplies of staples in Denver grew short and advanced to high prices. At one point the town was entirely out of coal oil and had to return to candles. A group of leading businessmen and officials seized opportunity by the forelock. They bought up all the flour and boosted the price to thirty-two dollars a hundred pounds.

The *News* had great difficulty obtaining paper to print on. With Dailey in the army, Byers was going it alone now. Bliss had withdrawn in September 1863 and Rounds shortly thereafter. The paper of September 24 announced dryly that the "junior [Bliss] retires to engage in other, and we hope more lucrative business, than the publication of a newspaper." During the grim days of 1864, Byers doggedly got out his sheet on whatever paper he could find. Sometimes it was only a dodger, printed in two or three columns of type on scraps of paper six or eight inches deep. He used brown wrapping paper, pink and white tissue paper, and there are reports of wallpaper and foolscap issues, though none of these has been located. On September 13, Byers printed a four-column handbill on bright orange cartridge paper and explained: "We used the last of our white paper yesterday for the *Daily*. For a few days we will be obliged to issue only a slip containing the telegraphic news and such items of local news as may be of importance."

The issue of October 1 is on a slick, yellow paper, possibly butcher's wrapping, and complains: "Every paper we issue now costs us more money than we receive for it." Byers managed a bit of grim humor out of the situation in his white tissue edition of October 5:

Wanted.—Three thousand shingles to be immediately delivered in lots of one thousand each, respectively, at the offices of the three newspapers of this territory, to be used for printing purposes, instead of the cartridge and tissue paper now employed.

The daily *News*, however, came through without missing an issue, although the weekly for November 5 was dropped. "Utterly unable to obtain paper."

Finally, on November 14 a wagon train with the *News'* paper stocks got through. It had been four months on the road. Byers resumed a full six-column folio format, but then on December 2 announced he was reducing the paper's size to five columns "simply to keep it, if possible, on a paying basis." He explained that paper was costing him sixty-five cents a pound delivered, compared with sixteen cents in the pioneer days of '59. Some, brought in by express coach, cost a dollar a pound. The paper remained small until April 1, 1865.

Much of the news in these starveling, get-by issues consists of reports and rumors of new Indian outrages. There are meager dispatches on the progress of the Civil War and one gallant comment on a turn for the better in women's fashions:

The ladies, according to the August magazines, have adopted a mode of gathering their garments in festoons by an elastic cord, which not only relieves them of dragging their skirts over the dusty pavements, but introduces to mankind one of the most attractive fashions extant. The American ladies have the handsomest feet of any in the world, and, having deprived us of the sight of them through an absurd fashion, we naturally welcome the return with joy.¹²

There was also politics to be watched and played. The *News* was beating its biggest drum for statehood, although by the most optimistic count there were fewer than thirty thousand residents in the whole territory. It also was trying to get Byers' friend Chivington elected to Congress. The big colonel had become a close personal and political friend of the editor as a result of the rescue on the night of the flood, and they also were associated in mining ventures.

The election to which the citizens were called on September 11 was an odd one. A proposed state constitution was before them for ratification or rejection, along with a slate of state officials. But at the same time they were asked to ballot on a territorial delegate to Congress. Chivington was a candidate both for member of and delegate to Congress. The *News* was whipped on its man and its issue. The nine thousand voters who turned out defeated the state constitution and thus the proposed new bid for statehood. Chivington was beaten by Allen A. Bradford as territorial delegate to Congress but outpolled Bradford for a seat in the House of Representatives which could not exist because the statehood move had gone down. The campaign had been a bitter one, and the lines drawn in it would bring sordid political cliques into the acrimonious debate over Indian policy.

¹²*Rocky Mountain News*, Aug. 3, 1864.

The *News* of this period often used an oblique reference to current news as a lead-in to a promotional or advertising paragraph in its "Locals" column. One effort to combine Indian outrages, politics, and printing turned up this ludicrous item:

Indian Murders.—The most revolting, shocking cases of assassination, arson, murder and manslaughter that have crimsoned the page of time have been done by Indians, in former days and recently,—but nevertheless we hold ourselves hourly prepared to strike you off from one to twenty thousand election tickets at lowest panic prices, and in the type of the art, that's sure to make you win.¹³

The first part of the paragraph is a fair sample of the attitude toward the Indians to which the *News* had now moved. When some of the Cheyenne and Arapaho chiefs came to Denver on September 28 to parley with Governor Evans there was talk of a new peace treaty. The *News* commented on the night before the council: ". . . we are opposed to anything which looks like a treaty of peace with the Indians who have been actively engaged in the recent hostilities. The season is near at hand when they can be chastised and it should be done with no gentle hand instead of patching up another compromise to be broken by them again next spring or summer when grass is good and their food plenty. . . ."

Cheyenne chiefs at the Denver council were Black Kettle, who for years had ignored the scorn of his young men and sought peaceful compromises with the whites; Bull Bear, chief of the Dog Soldiers; and old White Antelope, once a fierce Dog Soldier but now snowy-haired. White Antelope had been to Washington to talk peace with the Great White Father, and he wore on his breast a large medal given him in token of his promise to break his war arrows. Also present were Neva, No-ta-ne, Boisse, and Heap Buffalo, representing Left Hand of the Arapahoes. Left Hand, whose name remains on a creek and a foothills cañon north of Boulder, had visited Denver often and was well known as a friendly.

Governor Evans told the chiefs he had no power to conclude a peace treaty with them, that their fate was now in the hands of the military. He advised them to go back to Fort Lyon, as he had suggested in his earlier message to them, and to remain there out of harm's way. Colonel Chivington thundered threats and warnings at them, and then the parley broke up. The Indians accepted Evans' advice, and some of them said later they understood from his letter and his speech that if they complied they would be regarded as friendly Indians and would not come under attack by the cavalry troops now ranging the plains.

The chiefs led their bands back to Fort Lyon, where they turned in

¹³Ibid., Sept. 7, 1864.

their arms and were given food. A few days later the rifles were returned to them for hunting use. Officers at the fort said the guns were so old as to be almost worthless. The authorities at Lyon also told the Indians to move out away from the fort. So Black Kettle moved his mixed village up to the open prairie of the Arapaho-Cheyenne reservation and camped about forty miles north of the fort on the big bend of Sand Creek. He assumed he was still complying with Governor Evans' order to remain where he could be watched.

In Denver, meanwhile, the 3rd Colorado had been filled. The "100 Dazers" were eager for action and rankled under the taunt of "Bloodless Third." Their colonel was George L. Shoup, who had served with the 1st Colorados in New Mexico. Horses, arms and other equipment arrived at Camp Weld early in October, and the regiment of six hundred and fifty men sallied out into the Bijou basin east of Denver.

Chivington assumed personal command, outranking Shoup by virtue of his position as commander of the Colorado Military District. The big, black-bearded colonel, described by Jerome Smiley as "a fine example of the preacher militant," was determined to lead his troops to glory—and vault himself into Congress—by hitting the Indians a blow which would be hailed by everyone as decisive. Late in August he had delivered an address, either as a sermon or a campaign speech, in which he declared his policy was to "kill and scalp all, little and big," because "nits make lice." He was warmly applauded, and the phrase became a fighting slogan for the 3rd. "Nits make lice."¹⁴

In November, through two feet of snow, Chivington led his "Bloodless Third" southward. Units of the veteran 1st, now a cavalry regiment, what was left of it, joined him. As the column jogged down into the Arkansas Valley the ground cleared and the cold eased, but there were still white patches of snow out among the yucca clumps on the gray-brown prairie. The troopers huddled down in their new army-issue overcoats and cursed the maggoty hardtack given them for breakfast. They were saddle-sore, cold, and already sick of soldiering, with the first hostile redskin yet to be encountered.

There had not been a depredation within two hundred miles for two months, and the settlers were beginning to move back to their farms and ranches to harvest corn and try to round up scattered stock. John Dailey's Company A had been on a detached mission to Fort Garland, in the San Luis Valley, where he found the colonel in charge "d-k all day, as usual." Company A moved up to join the main column and lingered pleasantly and informally at Pueblo, where, Dailey's diary indicates, the "100 Dazers" faithfully observed the riotous traditions of the 1st Colorados. He records a wild and wonderful account of chicken and melon stealing, casual AWOLs, late sleeping, trout fishing, bitching, drunken officers, saloon fights, and tumbles in the hay with country

¹⁴*Senate Report No. 156, 39th Congress, 2nd Session (Washington, 1867), p. 71.*

maidens much impressed by new blue cavalry uniforms. Hangovers considered, it must have been rigorous duty for the officers. No one wanted to drill, guard duty was ignored, and none of the volunteers, apparently, obeyed any order unless the mood was on him and the tone of the command suitably civil.

Company A joined the main column, which then swung east down the river.

Chivington was getting the scent, and his tense excitement mounted. Two hundred and fifty pounds of six-foot fighting man, he forked his beautiful black horse like an emperor on parade. Imperiously he halted the United States mails. No one must know he was coming. In sudden, slashing movement to left and right he dispatched squadrons to nearby ranches to place occupants under house arrest until the command had moved far down the road beyond danger that word of its coming would pass on ahead. Out in advance of the spearpoint of the force rode Jim Beckwourth, the old mountain man, pressed into service as guide and scout. Poker-faced and stoic, Jim rode with his rifle cradled across his arms and one leg hooked up over the saddle for comfort. His passive brown eyes took in everything and seemed to see nothing.

The column surprised the small garrison of 1st Regiment troops and New Mexico volunteers at Fort Lyon. The black-bearded colonel was pleased when the garrison officers told him they had not known the 3rd had left the Bijou. He was more than life-sized. "Hero of Gloriéta," congressional candidate, and now author of a model cavalry maneuver across two hundred and fifty miles of open plains with a large body of troops in complete secrecy. Surely Washington could not long withhold his brigadier's stars.

Chivington routed out his men before dawn on November 28, and they had trotted into Fort Lyon at 9 A.M. They went into camp, but not before the colonel had circled the fort with a strong line of pickets. No one was to leave. Colonel's orders.

It now became apparent what was afoot. Some of Chivington's officers said later that they remonstrated with him against the plan, but their claims well may have been self-serving, as was so much of the testimony that would be given. Even if they did protest, it was of no consequence one way or the other. Chivington's mind, the mind of a popular hero and an ambitious man, was set. As leader of the "First Indian Expedition," he knew precisely what he was doing. As commanding officer of the Colorado Military District, he also knew, as well as any man could, where the Indians were. Any Christian scruples he may have felt had long since been conquered.

He knew where Black Kettle's village was. He and Evans had sent them there. He knew about what Indians he would find; they had been to visit him and hear his blusterings. He knew they were friendly. Or, at minimum, they professed friendship, had sought out, made themselves

subject to, and now relied upon the protection of the Fort Lyon troops. They would not suspect a thing.

Chivington also knew the work ahead would be bloody and easy. His force was far larger, better armed, better equipped than anything he would meet, and perhaps he had planned it that way a long time ago. Just when his design was laid can only be conjecture, but possibly it had been fermenting in his mind in September when he had told these chiefs exactly where to go and what to do to put themselves under the eye and command of his forces at Fort Lyon. Yet none of this need appear in public accounts. Chivington obviously was confident he could make it all seem to be a fiercely fought and glorious victory. The hysterical town of Denver, whipped up by the dispatches and editorials in the *News*, would support him in anything he did so long as Indians were killed. He could count on that.

By nightfall of November 28 all was in readiness. Three days' cooked rations in each man's saddlebags. Horses rested and fed. The bulk of the Fort Lyon garrison added to the force. At 8 P.M., under cover of darkness, Chivington moved out. All told, he had at his command about nine hundred and fifty mostly raw but well-equipped and emotionally aroused men, along with a battery of four 12-pounder mountain howitzers armed with grape and canister. The men were not told where they were going, except that there would be an Indian fight at the end of the march. Only the officers knew Chivington's secret.

Jim Beckwourth guided the long column of fours off to the north through the frosty night. Although Jim once was confused briefly by a low pool of fog lying in a swale like a lake, the course was straight and true. He brought the command to the top of a rise just as the eastern sky began to pale off to grays and yellows. There in the wide bottoms of white sand was Black Kettle's village, a few over a hundred lodges, most of them Cheyenne, eight or ten of them occupied by Left Hand's Arapahoes. The first morning smoke was just beginning to curl out of the wings of the tipis.

Chivington halted his column and rode back down the line.

"Off with your coats, men," the commander ordered. "You can fight better without them. Take no prisoners. Remember the slaughtered white women and children! Remember the Hungates!"

Beckwourth said he heard it this way: "I don't tell you to kill all ages and sex, but look back on the plains of the Platte, where your mothers, fathers, brothers, sisters have been slain, and their blood saturating the sands on the Platte."

According to his aide, Captain A. J. Gill, Chivington said: "Now boys, I shan't say who you shall kill, but remember our murdered women and children."

Then, at sunrise, the attack began.

It lasted eight hours or longer, and it presents as brain-splitting a pic-

ture of fiendish savagery as exists in the records of the human race. The day of November 29, 1864, ran deep with blood and rocked the heavens with insanity.

The village was totally surprised and wholly confused by the treachery. If reliable estimates can be found in the tangle of perjured testimony which came later, the lodges contained between five and six hundred Indians. At least two thirds of these were women and small children. Many of the others were old men, like Black Kettle and White Antelope themselves. Altogether there were perhaps a hundred warriors, armed with bows and arrows, lances and guns which had been turned back to them as worthless.

Other considerations aside for the moment, the battle was a horrible botch as a military operation. Those hundred ill-armed warriors kept nearly a thousand soldiers, mounted and supported by artillery, busy until midafternoon. Meanwhile nearly five hundred Indians escaped across the prairie, most of them on foot, through lines which supposedly encircled the camp. The "enemy" commander, Black Kettle, was among those who got away. Fighting was confused, disordered, entirely undisciplined. Command was lost early in the day and never recovered until after the last shot was fired. Soldiers caught each other in their own cross fire. Some of the eight killed and forty wounded were not victims of the Indians. Orders were lost, countermanded, or frankly disobeyed. If Chivington had displayed any military aptitude at Apache Cañon, he showed not a glimmer at Sand Creek.

Those of the Indians who could not flee died on the spot. The most credible estimates place the number at something under two hundred, though Chivington would claim five to six hundred killed out of a "hostile" force of nine hundred to a thousand. Two thirds of the bodies counted later were women and children.

White Antelope was among the first to go down. Soon after the firing began he advanced from his lodge toward the troopers with both hands upraised, palms forward, in the traditional sign of peace. Shots kicked up sand around him. He stopped, folded his arms, and began to chant his death song:

*"Nothing lives long,
Except the earth and the mountains . . ."*¹⁵

At last the excited volunteers found the range. The Lincoln peace medal on the old warrior's chest bounced and he pitched face forward to the ground.

As he had been instructed to do, Black Kettle flew the Stars and Stripes on a pole over his lodge. The flag had been given to him by

¹⁵Grinnell, op. cit., p. 178.

an Indian commissioner some years earlier. Under it he flew a white flag. Neither was recognized. The chief took his wife and began to flee. She was shot and went down. Troopers rode over her, putting eight more bullets in her body. But she was still alive, and Black Kettle, far past his prime as a brave, put her over his shoulder and ran. They got through the lines.

A three-year-old Indian child, perfectly naked, toddled out on the sands of the dry creek bed. Three troopers dismounted seventy yards away and assumed the position shown in the cavalry manual for kneeling fire. One carbine cracked and sand spurted at the child's heels. "Let me try the little son of a bitch," the second trooper demanded. He, too, fired and missed. "Hell," spat the third soldier, "you boys couldn't hit the side of a mountain." He took aim and squeezed. The baby dropped. One nit that would never make a louse.

Out of one of the lodges came running ole "Uncle John" Smith, one of the founders of Denver, the squawman who had helped build the city's first house. He had been sent to the Indian camp a few days earlier to trade and report on what the savages were doing. His orders had come from Major Scott J. Anthony, who now led a portion of the attack.

Smith ran out toward the troops and was greeted by fire. He was recognized. "Shoot the old son of a bitch," someone shouted; "he's no better than an Indian." Bullets spattered around him. The gray-haired man hesitated and then scuttled back toward his lodge. "Run here, Uncle John," Chivington himself called. "You are all right." Smith cast a glance back at the lodges, turned, and scampered toward the troops. He climbed on the caisson of one of the howitzers and was safe. So low had one of the founding fathers fallen for running with the redskin.

Smith's half-breed son Jack didn't fare as well. He was captured, held prisoner for twenty-four hours in a lodge, and then killed by a shot from a pistol thrust through a cut in the stretched buffalo hide of the tipi. Officers reported they were unable to ascertain who fired the shot. Chivington had been told that his troopers planned to kill Jack Smith. He had shrugged. His orders, he said, had been to take no prisoners; he couldn't change them now.

As the fight progressed madness seized the battlefield. The troopers had knives out and were scalping everything that fell, "one week to 80 years" of age. Children were shot at their mothers' breasts. The victims of the scalping were not always quite dead. One old squaw wandered sightless through the carnage. Her entire scalp had been taken, and the skin of her forehead fell down over her eyes to blind her. Several troopers got into a quarrel over who should have the honor of scalping one body. The issue could not be decided; so all took scalps from the same carcass.

Nor was the scalping the worst of it. The "Bloodless Thirsters" would

show the Indians a thing or two about barbarity and the finer points of mutilation.

A group of soldiers paused amid the firing to take turns profaning the body of a comely young squaw, very dead. The nose and ears, as well as the scalp, of White Antelope were cut off. Indians' fingers were hacked away to get their rings as souvenirs. One soldier trotted about with a heart impaled on a stick. Others carried off the genitals of braves. Someone had the notion that it would be artistic work to slice away the breasts of the Indian women. One breast was worn as a cap, another was seen stretched over the bow of a saddle. In Denver, many years later, there was a persistent rumor that one of the surviving Thirdsters had a tanned Indian breast that he carried in his pocket as a coin purse.

The catalogue of atrocities could go on and on. All except the ghoulish purse and the blinded squaw are from the sworn testimony presented to the two investigations into the affair ordered by Congress. The record of those proceedings form what is possibly the most shocking document in the American archives.¹⁸ How much of the testimony is truth and how much lie, no one can say; for it is obvious that otherwise honorable men, on both sides, perjured themselves repeatedly under oath. Partisanship was at white heat, and neither investigation was unprejudiced against Chivington. It is unlikely that he could have received a calm hearing, in Colorado or elsewhere, for a quarter century after that November day of 1864. Nearly halfway into the twentieth century Denver still remembered Sand Creek with shame. When someone, thinking of the valiant fight at La Gloriéta, proposed that a street be named Chivington, a storm of protest blew up and the boulevard got another designation. (Hale Parkway, for a Spanish-American War hero.)

Testimony at the hearings indicates that Chivington said he was out "after scalps," that he would give the Indians "a lively buffalo hunt," and that he "longed to be wading in gore." Others testified he "issued an order that he would hang any 'son of a bitch' who would bury the bodies or bones" of prisoners who were killed and that he asserted "he believed it right or honorable to use any means under God's heaven to kill Indians that would kill women and children, and 'damn any man that was in sympathy with Indians.'" It is probable the big colonel said these, or similar, things. Before Sand Creek, Denver was clamoring in almost one voice for extermination of the Indians, good or bad, and Chivington knew he had the city behind him.

When word of his victory reached Denver on December 7 the *News* carried a bulletin:

¹⁸*Executive Document No. 26, Senate, 39th Congress, 2nd Session (Washington, 1867) and Massacre of Cheyenne Indians, report of the Joint Committee on the Conduct of the War, House of Representatives, 38th Congress, 2nd Session (Washington, 1865).*

BIG INDIAN FIGHT.

The First and Third Regiments have had a battle with the Indians on Sand Creek, a short distance northeast of Fort Lyon. Five hundred Indians are reported killed and six hundred horses captured. Captain Baxter and Lieutenant Pierce are reported killed. No further particulars. A messenger is hourly expected with full details. *Bully for the Colorado boys.*

Next day the official report to Major General S. R. Curtis, commanding the Department of Kansas at Fort Leavenworth and Chivington's superior, was in. For the second time the colonel deliberately had disobeyed the orders of his commanding officer; Curtis in a general order had instructed all troops under his command to spare Indian women and children. Chivington did not admit his disobedience, however. He reported to Curtis:

Headquarters District of Colorado

In the field, on Big Bend of Sandy Creek, Col. Ter., Nov. 29, 1864

Sir: I have not the time to give you a detailed history of our engagement to-day, or to mention those officers and men who distinguished themselves in one of the most bloody Indian battles ever fought on these plains. You will find enclosed the report of my surgeon in charge, which will bring to many anxious friends the sad fate of loved ones who are and have been risking everything to avenge the horrid deeds of those savages we have so severely handled. We made a forced march of forty miles, and surprised, at break of day, one of the most powerful villages of the Cheyenne nation, and captured over five hundred animals; killing the celebrated chiefs One Eye, White Antelope, Knock Kno [Knee], Black Kettle, and Little Robe, with about five hundred of their people, destroying all their lodges and equipage, making almost an annihilation of the entire tribe.

I shall leave here, as soon as I can see our wounded safely on the way to the hospital at Fort Lyon, for the villages of the Sioux, which are reported about eighty miles from here, on the Smoky Hill, and three thousand strong; so look out for more fighting. I will state, for the consideration of gentlemen who are opposed to fighting these red scoundrels, that I was shown, by my chief surgeon, the scalp of a white man taken from the lodge of one of the chiefs, which could not have been more than two or three days taken; and I could mention many more things to show how these Indians, who have been drawing government rations at Fort Lyon, are and have been acting.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

J. M. Chivington

Col. Comd'g. Colorado Expedition against Indians on Plains

The *News* published the text of the report on December 8 and went on editorially:

This noted, needed whipping of the "red skins" by our "First Indian Expedition," particulars of which appear elsewhere, was the chief subject of comment and glorification through town today. The members of the Third, and First, and the First New Mexico, who collectively "cleaned out" the confederated savages on Sand Creek, have won for themselves and their commanders, from Colonel down to corporal, the eternal gratitude of dwellers of these plains. This brave beginning will bring down the *hauteur* of the treacherous tribes, all round, so that, should there not be even another similar defeat enacted on them through this season, our people may rest easy in the belief that outrages by small bands are at an end, on routes where troops are stationed. Having tasted of the "bitter end," the news of which will quickly be dispatched among the others, the supremacy of our power will be seriously considered, and a surrender or a suing for peace be perhaps very soon proclaimed. This plan of attacking them in their villages is the only one available, while it is certainly as advantageous to the Indians as they justly dare desire, if they're in for a fair fight.

Despite his brave declarations to General Curtis, Chivington moved his command not an inch nearer the big camp of hostile Cheyennes and Sioux eighty miles away on the headwaters of the Smoky Hill River. Instead he boldly scouted back in the direction of Fort Lyon and then east down the Arkansas. He reported he found no hostiles in that quarter. Along the way, he neglected to report, the Indian baby that had been thrown into the feed box of one of the wagons was abandoned on the prairie.

The hundred-day enlistments of his Thirdsters were now about to expire; so the colonel wheeled his column to the homeward road. They arrived in Denver December 22, and the *News* of that date tells of a big parade and a glorious homecoming. The "Bloodless Third" boasted that it was the "Bloody Third," and the whole town smiled proudly and applauded the boast.

The boys brought along "hundreds" of Cheyenne scalps, and the *News* confessed itself somewhat confused by the trophies. Every soldier, it said, "gives a different version" and "each has the scalp of the chiefs." The "local" editor commented: "Cheyenne scalps are getting as thick here now as toads in Egypt. Everybody has got one, and is anxious to get another to send east."

In addition to the scalps, the 3rd had brought home other spoils: three small Cheyenne children, two girls and a boy. The children were shoved out onto the stage of the Denver Theatre between acts to be exhibited as curiosities along with a rope of a hundred scalps. The captives shared the bill with "Signor Franco, the great stoneeater, and Mons. Malakoff, the celebrated sword swallower,"¹⁷ and big posters printed by the *News* were plastered up around town.

¹⁷*Rocky Mountain News*, Dec. 24, 1864.

As late as December 16, Chivington was still contending in his official messages that he had attacked a hostile camp of nine hundred to a thousand Indians and killed five to six hundred of them. And on December 17 the *News* was still standing staunchly behind him:

Among the brilliant feats of arms in Indian warfare, the recent campaign of our Colorado volunteers will stand in history with few rivals, and none to exceed it in final results. . . .

Whether viewed as a march or as a battle, the exploit has few, if any, parallels. A march of 260 miles in but a fraction more than five days, with deep snow, scanty forage, and no road, is a remarkable feat, whilst the utter surprise of a large Indian village is unprecedented. In no single battle in North America, we believe, have so many Indians been slain. . . .

A thousand incidents of individual daring and the passing events of the day might be told, but space forbids. We leave the task for eye-witnesses to chronicle. All acquitted themselves well, and Colorado soldiers have again covered themselves with glory.

Space also prevented mention of the fact that Indian women and children were killed, although the paper admitted "there were neither wounded nor prisoners."

Other and differing reports were being made, however, and the aroused Eastern press was demanding facts about the "massacre." Pressure was put on Congress to investigate. On December 30 the *News* printed a Washington dispatch saying that an investigation would be conducted on the strength of "letters received from high officials in Colorado" reporting that "the Indians were killed after surrendering, and that a large proportion of them were women and children." In the space immediately below the Washington dispatch the paper loosed its best irony on the "high officials":

Indignation was loudly and unequivocally expressed, and some less considerate of the boys were very persistent in their inquiries as to who those "high officials" were, with a mild intimation that they had half a mind to "go for them." This talk about "friendly Indians" and a "surrendered" village will do to "tell to marines," but to us out here it is all bosh.

The *confessed* murderers of the Hungate family—a man and wife and their two little babies, whose scalped and mutilated remains were seen by all our citizens—were "friendly Indians," we suppose, in the eyes of these "high officials." *They* fell in the Sand creek battle.

The confessed participants in a score of other murders of peaceful settlers and inoffensive travellers upon our borders and along our roads in the past six months must have been *friendly*, or else the "high officials" wouldn't say so. . . .

Possibly those scalps of white men, women and children, *one of them fresh, not three days taken*, found drying in their lodges, were taken in a *friendly*, playful manner; or possibly those Indian saddle-blankets trimmed with the scalps of white women, and with braids and fringes of their hair, were kept simply as mementoes of their owners' high affection for the pale face. At any rate, these delicate and tasteful ornaments could not have been taken from the heads of the wives, sisters or daughters of these "high officials." . . .

The House of Representatives went ahead anyway and on January 10, 1865, ordered an investigation which began in March. Clippings from the *News* were read into the record as comments from "the organ of Governor Evans." Governor Evans himself was called as a witness and masterfully side-stepped questions to the great annoyance of committee members. At the conclusion of its hearings the committee issued a blistering report.¹⁸ It said in part:

. . . From the suckling babe to the old warrior, all who were overtaken were deliberately murdered. Not content with killing women and children, who were incapable of offering any resistance, the soldiers indulged in acts of barbarity of the most revolting character; such, it is to be hoped, as never before disgraced the acts of men claiming to be civilized. . . .

It is difficult to believe that beings in the form of men, and disgracing the uniform of United States soldiers and officers, could commit or countenance the commission of such acts of cruelty and barbarity. . . .

His [Governor Evans'] testimony before your committee was characterized by such prevarication and shuffling as has been shown by no witness they have examined during the four years they have been engaged in their investigations [of the conduct of the Civil War]; and for the evident purpose of avoiding the admission that he was fully aware that the Indians massacred so brutally at Sand creek, were then, and had been, actuated by the most friendly feelings towards the whites, and had done all in their power to restrain those less friendly disposed. . . .

As to Colonel Chivington, your committee can hardly find fitting terms to describe his conduct. . . he deliberately planned and executed a foul and dastardly massacre which would have disgraced the veriest savage among those who were the victims of his cruelty. . . .

Almost concurrently with the Washington investigation a three-man military commission met for seventy-six days in Denver and at Fort Lyon to hear duplicating but more extensive testimony. Chivington, now a civilian, appeared before the commission with attorneys in an effort to defend his actions. The commission made no finding, but the evidence

¹⁸*Massacre of Cheyenne Indians.*

it heard was damning. During the course of its inquiry one of the principal witnesses against Chivington, Captain Silas S. Soule, was assassinated in the streets of Denver. His killer, a soldier of the 2nd Colorado Cavalry named Squires, admitted the slaying, then was reported to have escaped. Squires was not seen in Denver again.

Byers lost the fight to save his friend Chivington. The Methodist Church forced his resignation as presiding elder, and the big man left town stripped of honor, his political dreams shattered. He returned to Denver years later to die.

Nor was time kind to the predictions of the *News* that the affair at Sand Creek would bring peace to the plains. Outrages did not come to an end. Hauteur was not decreased. There was no surrender or suing for peace. Instead of striking terror, the "bully" work of the "Bloody Third" kindled a towering anger that scorched the prairies from Montana to Texas for twenty years to come. When Custer and his men went down on the Little Big Horn in 1876, Cheyenne and Arapaho warriors were leading the charges.

Fugitives from Sand Creek had scarcely been sheltered in the Cheyenne-Sioux camp at the head of the Smoky Hill before the war pipe was making its rounds. Cheyenne pipe bearers fanned out to the northern tribes, and all the chiefs they visited smoked.

On January 6, little more than a month after Sand Creek, the Indians hit Julesburg with a force of one thousand warriors. The *News* reported the attack on January 7 and offered:

A SUGGESTION.

Since it is a settled fact that the friendly—peaceable—surrendered—hightoned—gentle-minded—quiet—inoffensive savages are again "on it" down the Platte, we respectfully suggest that a small select battalion of "high officials" be permitted to go down instanter to pacify the devils, receive their arms and negotiate a treaty by which they will bind themselves not to massacre any but the outside settlements this winter, and also to let an occasional train come through with bread and meat. We have no doubt that the gentlemen are ready, willing and waiting to enter upon the pleasant duty of proceeding under the protection of a white flag, with olive branches in their hands, to the country residences of Messrs. Black Kettle, White Antelope & Co., where it will be their pleasure to fix things to suit them.

Three days later another Indian force struck on the Arkansas, and so it went through the 1860s and into the '70s. Exposed settlers, wagon freighters, fort garrisons, railroad builders, and cavalymen paid the price for Chivington's moment of glory. Jim Beckwourth told the military inquiry that he made a private attempt in January of 1865 to mediate.

Jim, known to the Cheyennes as "Medicine Calf," set out alone from Denver and rode boldly into a camp on White Man's Fork. He told the commission:

I went into the lodge of Leg-in-the-Water. When I went in he raised up and he said, "Medicine Calf, what have you come here for; have you fetched the white man to finish killing our families again?" I told him I had come to talk to him; call in your council. They came in a short time afterwards, and wanted to know what I had come for. I told them I had come to persuade them to make peace with the whites, as there was not enough of them to fight the whites, as they were as numerous as the leaves of the trees. "We know it," was the general response of the council. But what do we want to live for? The white man has taken our country, killed all of our game; was not satisfied with that, but killed our wives and children. Now no peace. We want to go and meet our families in the spirit land. We loved the whites until we found out they lied to us, and robbed us of what we had. We have raised the battle-axe until death. . . .¹⁹

In October of 1865 two men who should have been listened to backed off and took a long-range view of the flaming plains. Their summary and suggestions, ranged against the violent temper of the times, stand out as singularly wise and prescient. Both knew what they were talking about, if any men in the West did. They were Colonel Christopher (Kit) Carson and Colonel William W. Bent of Bent's Fort, whose 'breed son, incidentally, had been among the Indians wounded at Sand Creek. In a letter to Major General John Pope, Carson and Bent wrote:

. . . For a number of years the policy of our Government has been to remove our Indians Westward, before the steady advancing tide of Eastern progress, but now emigration leaps forward from the West itself, swarming over the Eastern slope of the Sierra Nevada, and will probably soon make the Rocky Mountains resound throughout its entire length to the hum of busy life . . . gradually encircling them [the Indians] with its ever advancing stride, civilization presses them on all sides, their ancient homes forcibly abandoned, their old hunting grounds destroyed by the requirements of industrious and civilized life, how pitiable a prospect is presented for the preservation of any portion of those vast numbers of aboriginals that swarmed through the interior of our continent the happy possessors of a country full of game, and replete with everything that tended to realize their ignorant ideas of happiness and comfort. The cruel or the thoughtless, might leave to this steady advance of a superior race, the ultimate destruction of the various Indian tribes, that it would occur from this cause alone is certain, but humanity shudders at the picture presented by the destruction of hundreds of thousands of our fellow creatures, until every effort shall

¹⁹*Senate Executive Document No. 26, pp. 71-72.*

have been tried for their redemption and found useless, by dispossessing them of their country, we have assumed their stewardship, and the manner in which this duty is performed will add a glorious record to all American history, or a damning blot and reproach for all future time. . . .²⁰

In oblique reference to Chivington's raid, Carson and Bent urged that the army garrison the Indian country with "Regular troops, and officers of known discretion and judgment . . . (who would) not rashly place the country in danger of an Indian war in consequence of any slight provocation on the part of the Indians."

The Civil War was over, and William Tecumseh Sherman had come west from his march to the sea in Georgia to take over the nasty, thankless task of cleaning up the plains after Chivington. Sherman saw the Carson-Bent letter and passed it on to U. S. Grant with the comment: "Probably no two men exist better acquainted with the Indians than Carson & Bent and their judgment is entitled to great weight."²¹

The *News* was only one of a number of Western journals which kept up a steady, sniping fire on Sherman and his policies. The army was not prosecuting the Indian wars vigorously enough. Sherman's thinly spread cavalymen never seemed to be at the right place at the right time. The papers wrote of "Poor Lo" with heavy-handed sarcasm, and the *News* branded treaties as farcical. Extermination was the only thing that would satisfy the West, and it was proceeding.

The last chapter in the sordid, bitter tragedy was written in September 1879 high in the Colorado Rockies on the White River at a place called Milk Creek. Byers had a role to play in it too.

An active, restless, questing man, Byers never was too busy editing his *News*, supervising Indian wars, or searching for mine bonanzas, to take time to range his beloved mountains. He explored them on foot and horseback from the San Juans to the Yampa River country, from the Spanish Peaks to the Laramie Plains. He prospected as he went, collected wild flowers and geological specimens, scaled peaks to see the view, and always wet a line in any likely trout water.

In 1867, on a fishing and tramping outing with Bayard Taylor of the New York *Tribune*, Byers visited mountain-girt Middle Park. He was entranced by its lush beauty, the green meadows and clear, sparkling streams where the mighty cañon-carving Colorado River has its origins, the spectacular peaks which surround the protected valley. Middle Park became his personal Shangri-La. (Many years later, when the weariness of age and many responsibilities was on him, he wrote plaintively to his

²⁰Carson and Bent to Pope, Oct. 26, 1865, War Department Records, National Archives, File C-201-1865.

²¹Sherman to Grant, Nov. 6, 1865, William T. Sherman Papers, Vol. 17, Library of Congress; quoted in Athearn, *op. cit.*, p. 26.

son that he wished he could sell everything he had in Denver and "go to the woods" in Middle Park *"and stay."*)

Byers homesteaded one of the first ranches in Middle Park and ceaselessly experimented there with nut culture, forestry, and the growing of grains, vegetables, and fruits never before seen in a high mountain valley of the Rockies. Later he divided a portion of the ranch into lots and founded the town of Hot Sulphur Springs. The town takes its name from warm springs, within the original Byers homestead, which in the early days flowed in a six-foot cascade into a basin of rock. The Utes of the mountains had known the springs from time beyond memory, and they came there to cure wounds and rheumatism in the hot mineral waters.

Byers became well acquainted with many of the passing Utes and achieved a measure of standing among them, even though he was an illegal squatter and they had better title to the springs than he did. The country still was treaty land for the Utes, and Byers would not hold true title to his lands and hot waters until he acquired them later by pre-emption. Nevertheless, at least some of the Utes respected him. At one council following a brush between braves and settlers the Indians told all the other whites to shut up and let Byers do their talking for them.

The editor of the *News* knew both the country and its natives, and thus he was the logical man to lead the counterattack when, as Marshall Sprague puts it, Denver "braced itself against invasion by eighteen Ute lodges" in 1878. The small band had committed minor depredations and then killed a settler to avenge, they said, the prior killing of one of their clan by a Hot Sulphur Springs posse which included Byers' son Frank. When the word of the "uprising" reached Denver, Sheriff Dave Cook and Byers got together twenty-six hardies and rushed up to Middle Park.

After only five days of roughing it Cook and fifteen others turned back. Byers took the remaining squad and pushed over the Roan Plateau and on to the White River Ute Agency. There he learned that his quarry had flown long since in entirely the opposite direction and by now was far away to the south in the Uncompahgres. Byers also met a remarkable English-speaking Ute woman named Jane, who spunkily told him he was on the reservation with armed men and had better get out immediately. The expedition left by way of Milk Creek, where Byers had heard there were some trout he ought to try.

The man in charge at the White River Ute Agency was Nathan C. Meeker, who was probably the least qualified man in the West to be an Indian agent. It was not that he was evil. Quite the contrary. It was just that the sight of evil hurt him so that he couldn't bear not reforming evildoers. Throughout his life, which would end soon, Nathan Meeker was shocked, appalled, and saddened by the base instincts of his fellow man as demonstrated by cursing, waltzing with women, and lack of thrift

and industry. And now he was in charge of the White River Utes, who worshiped nature and spent their lives doing what came naturally.

Meeker had been a Greenwich Village poet, a Fourierist Phalangist, then Civil War correspondent and, later, agricultural editor—an important post, considering the boss's inclinations—of Horace Greeley's *Tribune*. Through Greeley he became acquainted with Byers, and when the *Tribune* editor decided to sponsor a "union colony" agricultural experiment in the West, Byers just happened to have on hand the ideal spot for it. Byers, as has been noted, wore many hats. One of them was that of Colorado agent for the National Land Company, an organization established to dispose of the public lands granted to the Denver Pacific Railroad for pushing its rails across the plains to Denver.

Byers sold Meeker twelve thousand acres of northern Colorado land, much of it useless without water and six hundred and forty acres, it developed, not even owned by the National Land Company. The site was near the railroad stop of Evans, and it became the city of Greeley. The colony was limited to "temperance people of good moral character," and to this day ardent spirits cannot be vended in Greeley.

Meeker became president of the colony and a prompt failure, though much loved and respected by the "Saints," as the old settlers called them. He couldn't balance the books. His irrigation project flopped. The Colorado climate, despite his determination and good works, would not grow walnut and hickory trees. The grasshoppers ate up the crops planted according to scripture as found in Horace Greeley's book *What I Know about Farming*.

Despite the land deal, Meeker and Byers became close friends. When the hard-driving Utopian found himself in need of a job the *News* editor helped pull political strings in Washington to get him appointed agent of the White River Ute Agency in northwest Colorado. Meeker took the post with characteristic zeal. Here was man's work and God's. He would bring his innocent, ignorant charges up from savagery to civilization. Moreover he would do it before the year was out. The mission was a challenge, an inspiration.

Meeker began by plowing up the Utes' racecourse in the meadows to show them how to plant crops and to discourage immoral idleness, sporting, and gambling. Things went from bad to worse. The Utes willfully refused to be civilized on Meeker's crash time schedule, and the good but foolish man's heart was slowly broken. He became distant and disinterested, petulant and arbitrary in his orders, and finally vindictive, growling about chains and hangings for his disobedient red children.

Violence came, and finally Meeker telegraphed for troops. It was too late. On September 29, 1879, the Utes ambushed Major Thomas T. Thornburgh and his command on Milk Creek and attacked the agency, near the present town of Meeker. They killed Thornburgh and a number of his troopers. They killed Meeker and all of his white male employees

at the agency. Meeker's stripped body was found with a log chain around his neck. He had been dragged around the corral behind one of the Indian ponies. Then a barrel stave had been pushed down his throat.

The agency buildings were burned, and the three white women present—Meeker's wife Arvilla, his grown daughter Josie, and Flora Price—kidnaped. They were carried away on a long trail with rape at every night's stop. The women eventually were given up when the Southern Ute chief, Ouray, intervened and put an end to the rampage of his White River cousins.

The "Meeker Massacre" was an ugly, brutal, and tragic affair, and it also was the last major uprising of the American Indian. He had escaped extermination, narrowly, but he now could be shoved entirely out of the way of the white man's civilization.

In his masterful history of the barbaric last stand on White River, Marshall Sprague summarizes:

All told, this small Ute band killed thirty white men and wounded forty-four more. Their punishment was the usual. They and their neighbors, the Uncompahgre Utes, who had nothing to do with either the ambush or the massacre, were branded as criminals without trial by commissions of doubtful legality. Their treaty rights which had been guaranteed them by the United States Senate were canceled. Their rights to be American citizens as described in the Fourteenth Amendment were ignored. Title to their twelve-million-acre Colorado homeland, which they had owned exclusively since pre-Columbian times, was extinguished. They were moved at gunpoint to barren lands in Utah. By these means, the last and largest chunk of desirable Indian real estate in the nation, the Western Slope of Colorado, was thrown open to white settlement.²²

The Denver papers, along with nearly every other journal in the nation, burst into flame over the massacre. Byers was hard hit by the slaughter of his friend; why, it had been only a short time ago that Elizabeth Byers had received a note from Arvilla Meeker thanking her for the gift of a dress to an Indian girl, the daughter of Jane, who had been so saucy the year before. Byers now was no longer editor and publisher of the *Rocky Mountain News*, but surely this last and final outrage vindicated, once more, the harsh and flaming words he had published in the dark days of '64 and '65 when the whole inexorable process began.

²²Marshall Sprague, *Massacre: The Tragedy at White River* (Boston, 1957), p. ix.

CHAPTER TWELVE

Iron Horses and a Scandal

BACK on the shores of the Missouri brawny gangs of brawling men were shaping a final answer to the West's ever explosive "Indian question." Many of them were Irish emigrants, refugees from potato famine in the homeland. The "terriers," as they chose to call themselves, were iron men—muscle, stomach, and disposition.

They could riot most of the night in some tent saloon, perhaps sleep it off under the stars in a prairie slough, and be ready at dawn for a long day of brute labor under a pitiless sun. A little cabbage-stack locomotive would come wheezing out, pushing a flatcar loaded with rails before it. The rails were transferred to a smaller, horse-drawn car and pulled forward to where the newly graded roadbed waited. A dozen men then would take their places on each side of the car. On signal of the foreman—"Hup!"—two heavy rails of iron would go up on shoulders. In lock-step cadence the rails were marched to position. "Halt! Down! On with another, me boys! Drill, ye terriers!" A rhythmic clang of sledges on spikes, and "end of track"—manifest destiny's newest catch phrase—would be a few feet farther west on the Nebraska sod than it had been minutes before. The horses pulling the car would have farther to go next trip, and the end of the Plains Indian's wild ways was closer by measurable inches and feet of adamant iron.

"End of Track" became a dateline, like "With the Troops" or "On the High Seas," for newspaper dispatches which told an exciting story of a continent being spanned. In the East newspaper readers thrilled with national pride at the steady march of civilization. In Denver the approaching rails meant an end to isolation, a chance to arrive, to be, to bloom in the full tradition of expansive American progress.

The Pacific railroad had been a continental dream since early in the 1850s. It had been the subject of much talk, huge visions, and a lot of sordid politicking. Numerous expeditions had fanned out to seek and survey the several "best ways" to and through the West. Finally, on December 2, 1863, the first spade of dirt was turned at Omaha for a mile-long grade which since has disappeared into the bed of the shifting Missouri. The Union Pacific was on its way. The troubles of war and

finance, however, put a blight to the auspicious beginning, and it was not until July 10, 1865, that the first spike was driven and the track laying started. The peace of Appomattox was only two months new.

Within a few months more the "hero of Atlanta" would be waging an exasperating war over tens of thousands of square miles with a copper-colored enemy, often half naked and yelling, who could and would teach his cavalry lessons in hit-and-run tactics. Sherman quickly saw in the railroad a solution to the now necessarily forcible pacification of the Indian. Railways through the West would make it possible for him quickly to move his troops, steadily diminishing as American armies always do immediately after a war, over great distances to seek out and punish marauding bands. As a mounted warrior the Indian has few equals in the long history of warfare, and Sherman's cavalry was finding him hard to catch. The Indian refused to be maneuvered into large and formal battles. Small war parties, often fewer than a hundred braves, would pounce suddenly out of nowhere and then disappear into the trackless void of the plains. By the time a company of cavalry could ride out from the nearest post the war party would be long gone and in a direction no man could tell. Railroads, Sherman saw, would greatly increase the maneuverability of his thinly spread army. Moreover, the rails would bring more and more settlers to maintain a steady pressure on the tribes, forcing them into smaller and smaller ranges where they might be cornered, whipped, and brought to terms.

So Sherman did everything he could, short of dismounting his troopers and putting them in the terrier gangs, to speed the rails westward. He detailed units to guard the track-laying crews, and the surveying parties far out in advance usually worked under protection of squadrons of cavalry. The protection was not always perfect. Irish scalps were taken, and the railroads began to arm their construction gangs, berating Sherman for not keeping the Indians away. But the track was getting laid, often at record-breaking speeds, and straight across the buffalo runs and the hunting trails. It was coming on toward sundown for a free, nomadic, nature-following way of life centuries old.

As the rails reached and spread out through Colorado's mountains and plains they became a factor in the last brushes between an ebullient new commonwealth and the hated red savages it always contended were about to swallow it alive. When the ambush came on Milk Creek, soldiers were moved by Union Pacific to Rawlins, Wyoming, to ride south to the rescue of Thornburgh's survivors.

By June of 1867 the transcontinental line had reached the extreme northeast corner of Colorado Territory, and the man who had marched through Georgia came west on iron wheels for an inspection tour. From Julesburg on June 6 he telegraphed Governor Alexander C. Hunt in Denver:

I am here now and General Augur is across the Platte on the line of the Union Pacific Railway. The Indians are everywhere. Ranchers should gather at stage stations. Stages should bunch up and travel together at irregular times. I have six companies of Cavalry and General Custer is coming up from the Smoky Hill Route.

General W. T. Sherman¹

The Indians were not blind to what was happening to them. In 1868 the Union Pacific had climbed to the Continental Divide at Jim Bridger's Pass in Wyoming, and the Kansas Pacific was slashing west through Kansas and the heart of the great buffalo range which lay between the Platte and the Arkansas rivers. The restlessness of the tribes grew, and they hit at any target which exposed itself to their raids. During August a band of Arapahoes estimated at two hundred initially, and at six hundred as fevers rose, began hitting at Colorado settlements, some of them within sixty miles of Denver. Their attacks precipitated what has been called "Hall's War" in memory of Acting Governor Frank Hall, later one of the state's historians.

Governor Hunt was up at Byers' hot springs in Middle Park. He was one of a party of high-ranking dudes the editor of the *News* was entertaining with a taste of roughing it in the Rockies. Also in the group were Schuyler Colfax, Speaker of the House of Representatives and soon to become Grant's boodling Vice-President; William Bross, the powerful Midwestern politician from Illinois and part owner of the *Chicago Tribune*; Samuel Bowles, editor of the *Springfield Republican*; and John Wesley Powell, professor, naturalist, and future explorer of the Grand Canyon. The party arrived at Hot Sulphur Springs on August 14, just two days after Byers recorded in his diary that he had caught forty-two pounds of trout on the Williams Fork. The editor guided his guests up the same fishing waters, and presumably all came back with filled creels.

Back in Denver, Acting Governor Frank Hall was having no carefree outing. His people were jumping sideways at the mere mention of Indians, and they demanded that he take action to defend them. Hall began firing telegrams in all directions. Speaker Colfax and his party, he wired Sherman, were in imminent danger of being captured or massacred. "For God's sake give me authority to take your men," Hall said in a telegram to General Phil Sheridan, demanding use of federal troops at Fort Reynolds near Pueblo. Sherman authorized him to call up a militia, and by the last of August Hall was insisting that the army supply rifles: "My men are fighting the Indians every day at Latham & I am compelled to keep them supplied." Pressure was brought on Colfax to use his considerable influence in Washington to see that the army didn't let the Indians wipe Colorado off the map. The crusty Sherman, now

¹E. O. Davis, *The First Five Years of the Railroad Era in Colorado* (Denver, 1948), p. 3.

increasingly testy under the cross fire of Indian lovers in the East and Indian haters in the West, told everyone to keep his pants on, that he was doing the best he could. Certainly he wasn't going to send a full regiment of cavalry to Denver, as requested by Hall, when he had only four regiments to cover the entire plains.

There was much panic and a little fighting. A few men, red and white, were killed, and as usual Indian casualties far outnumbered white. Eventually "Hall's War" dwindled away and the telegraph wires had a chance to cool off. By October, Sherman had moved enough men by railroad into the high prairie country to restore a measure of peace and quiet.²

Not, however, before the Cheyennes and Sioux under Roman Nose staged another "massacre" on the Colorado plains very near to Sherman's wonderful railroad at Julesburg. In the Battle of Beecher Island some six hundred Indians cornered a cavalry force of fifty-one men under Major George A. Forsyth, one of Phil Sheridan's staff, on a sandy island in the Arickaree Fork of the Republican River. The battle site is close to the Colorado-Kansas line about seventeen miles south of Wray.

Forsyth's troopers were trapped and besieged on September 17, 1868, and they were held under attack by circling warriors until a rescue force reached them on the twenty-fifth. The soldiers ran out of food during the siege. They caught and ate a coyote, pronouncing it "very good." They ate prickly pears and their own horses. A soup was made from putrid horse meat salted with gunpowder. When units of the 10th and 2nd Cavalry Regiments arrived to end the battle, Forsyth, himself wounded, counted five of his men killed, including Lieutenant Frederick W. Beecher, for whom the island and the battle were named. Grinnell says Indians who were there told him the Cheyennes and Sioux lost seven of their number. But one of them was the great Roman Nose. He had gone into the battle convinced he would die. A squaw had lifted food for him with an iron fork. "That breaks my medicine," Roman Nose said. "I'll be killed today." He was right.³

The Beecher Island battle with its heroic stand by a small, badly outnumbered cavalry force is the stuff of Indian war legend. The last great countermarching by the habitually beleaguered Colorado whites, "Colorow's War" of 1887, was strictly comic opera. The railroads played a part in it, and naturally William N. Byers was there.

Colorow was a Comanche who early had adopted himself into the Utes and attained a measure of standing as leader of one band of the White River branch of the mountain tribe. With the others he had

²Robert G. Athearn, "Colorado and the Indian War of 1868," *Colorado Magazine*, Vol. XXXIII, No. 1 (Jan. 1956), pp. 42ff.

³Grinnell, op. cit., pp. 277ff.; see also Merrill J. Mattes, "The Beecher Island Battlefield: Diary of Sigmund Schlesinger," *Colorado Magazine*, Vol. XXIX, No. 3 (July 1952), pp. 161ff.

been banished to Utah following the Meeker Massacre in 1879. But the White River country still had game and was filling up slowly with settlers, and the Utes sometimes came back to their old homeland for hunts.

In August of 1887 a report reached Denver that Colorow had invaded Colorado. The fat old chief, who earlier had been a familiar beggar at ranch houses in the Denver area, had brought a band of some twelve braves and enough old men, women, and children to make up a force of between forty and fifty persons, and had come into Colorado seeking game. Along the way they had stolen two horses at Rangely and sold them at Meeker. Garfield County had been newly organized in the White River country, and it had an energetic sheriff named Jim Kendall who was anxious to prove to his scattered constituents that they had picked the right man for the job. He mounted a posse of seventy-two men to turn back Colorow's invasion and telegraphed word to Denver that northwestern Colorado was under attack.

Governor Alva Adams called out seven brigades of the Colorado National Guard, some thousand guardsmen, and for their transport in this hour of Colorado's peril seized every available car of the Denver & Rio Grande Railway. By this date the narrow-gauge lines were climbing through the Colorado Rockies like mountain goats. No mine was so high on any peak that the "little iron" couldn't get there to haul its ores away. The Denver & Rio Grande had pushed its line down the Colorado River as far as Gypsum. The guardsmen were dispatched thence as fast as the diminutive engines could pull them up and over the steep grades.

At a more leisurely pace Governor Adams assembled a command force, Byers in charge because of his knowledge of the Middle Park country and the Utes. The gubernatorial brass chugged over to Glenwood Springs, and Byers led them north to the threatened village of Meeker. They encountered no hostiles.

Meanwhile Colorow's band had accidentally run into Sheriff Kendall's men and there had been a loud argument broken off by gunfire from the posse. Colorow gathered his berry-picking squaws together and started his bunch ambling back toward the reservation. Kendall and the guardsmen finally caught up with them just two miles short of the Utah border and forced a fight. Three white men and eight Utes died. It also cost the now sovereign state of Colorado \$80,314.72, and untallied wear and tear on nerves, to turn back an old biscuit-beggar and his band of reservation-jumpers. Moreover the Utes kept right on hunting for years thereafter in the high and lonely White River wilds.⁴

As the West moved into the railroad era and Indian alarms dwindled away into busynesses, Denver began its first period of solid growth. The

⁴Sprague, *op. cit.*, pp. 326-28.

key date is June 24, 1870, and the expansion, long delayed, was an explosive release of pent-up forces.

The Civil War and the Indian troubles had been powerful deterrents to civic progress on the frontier. Denver and her boosters, Byers and his *News* in the front rank, could chalk up few really substantial gains during the first decade. At least they would have been hampered in their patriotism had they been candid about it, which of course they weren't. A town had been started under rather hectic circumstances, and it had acquired at some cost in pain and pelf a few of the accouterments of nineteenth-century American civilization. But Denver was far from the city it pretended to be. The population, which had dropped to around 2000 during the rebellion, climbed slowly to about 3000 in 1864, but this was still short of the peak reached in the heyday of the gold rush in 1860. A census ordered by the territorial legislature in the summer of 1866 could find only 3500 residents in town, and the first official federal census in 1870 counted 4759 souls, a net gain of fewer than 1000 persons in four trying years.

Antelope still could be hunted within the city limits in 1864, and the *News* announced on April 23 of that year that the streets were so muddy a theatrical performance had to be canceled. So far as the streets were concerned, things weren't much better seven years later. The *Central City Register* jibed down from its rocky perch in the mountains in April 1871: "The streets of Denver were reported to be navigable for the largest type of flat boats."

Settlers weren't arriving in very large numbers but grasshoppers did. Colorado was visited by plagues of locusts in 1864, 1865, and 1867, and the insects contributed heavily to the woes of the despondent years. Great swarms of Rocky Mountain locusts, commonly called grasshoppers, descended on the state and devoured everything in sight. The *Register* said of one invasion:

As the sun reached the meridian today, countless millions of grasshoppers were seen in the air while the atmosphere for miles high was literally crammed with them. They sailed by under the pressure of a light east wind in vast billowy clouds, the lower strata falling in a ceaseless shower on the ground, covering the streets, sidewalks, the exterior of buildings, jumping, crawling, crushed by every passing foot, filling the eyes and ears, and covering the garments of pedestrians, swarming everywhere in irrepressible currents.

Crops were ruined and prices of foodstuffs soared. The *News* for October 9, 1865, said that had it not been for the 'hoppers "the territory would this year have produced its own supply of breadstuffs, vegetables, and feed for stock. They destroyed the crop totally in many places and injured it in all." War, Indians, mud, high prices, drouth, and disaster. What next in this dismal decade?

But many churches and a few schools had been built, and General U. S. Grant came visiting in July 1868. He was given a memorable public reception in the Masonic hall on the third floor—the sky line was mounting—of the Tappan Building on Fifteenth Street. Grant returned again in 1873 as President and on a visit to Central City alighted from his carriage to walk over a pavement of solid silver ingots into the Teller House, quaint old mountain hostelry still in use today, self-consciously restored to Victorian charms.

The antimacassars and onyx statuary in the Teller House weren't the only indications that a veneer of gentility was being applied to rude frontier mores. Pump organs were appearing in parlors, and lawns and shrubbery at doorsteps. There was a great "sanitary festival" in Denver on February 28, 1864, to raise money for care of the ill. The new delicacy, ice cream, could be purchased. Editor Byers, a moderate man where potables were concerned, was developing a taste for sherry. And although his *News* snarled ferociously at the Indians, he was an advocate of conservation for all other forms of wild life. The *News* of May 20, 1864, addressed a strong plea to trigger-happy pioneers to stop killing the songbirds.

Byers and Dailey apparently were not long in winning their way back from the financial disaster of the '64 flood. They were renters when they moved to the Murdock building on Larimer Street in July of that year. Two years later they were putting up their own masonry building down the street a few doors in the same block.

Somewhere along the way, possibly in payment for a job-printing bill, the *News* partners acquired the lots at 389 Larimer (now numbered about 1547). Business must have been good for them in spite of war, Indian-enforced isolation, and a grasshopper plague. They had recouped their nineteen-thousand-dollar flood loss and the four thousand dollars laid out for the *Commonwealth*. Now they were ready once again to put up their own building. Although he never managed to stay very far out of debt, Byers abhorred being anyone's tenant.

The lots owned by the paper were still unoccupied in 1866 despite the growing importance of Larimer Street. They were situated just south of the corner of G (Sixteenth) Street on the west side of the block. Byers' diary for May 23, 1866, notes that he "contracted with Kinney for first and second story walls of printing office—first of stone at \$8.00 a perch, 2nd of grout at 15 cts. per foot." Next day he concluded an agreement with Flaherty & Hays for excavation at sixty cents a yard and for a well "at \$1.75 per foot to be walled with brick or \$1.50 per foot if curbed with wood." By July 30, Byers had the satisfaction of watching the joists go up, and the grout for the second story was under way on August 2.

When completed, the building was pronounced an ornament to the city. Large letters across the front proclaimed it the "News Block." It

was a two-and-a-half-story structure with a brick front fancily cut up into five arched doorways. The building extended sixty feet toward the rear of the lot, and it had a deep basement for the steam-powered Campbell cylinder press capable of turning out twelve hundred newspapers an hour. The editorial and counting rooms occupied the south part of the ground floor and the north half was rented to the United States Express Company, the stage line which operated the Overland Express. The composing room was on the second floor, except for job work, which was handled in the basement. A couple of rented law offices were squeezed into the second floor, too, just to help meet overhead. The half-story garret was a book bindery.

On September 19, 1866, the paper proudly announced:

The *News* building, near the corner of Larimer and G streets, is rapidly approaching completion. We shall soon be permanently, we trust, established within its walls. Living beneath one's own vine and fig tree, with no rents to pay, is a rather enjoyable thing these tight times.

The move was made October 5, and the paper craved the indulgence of its subscribers in the necessity of skipping an issue. "Our patrons will please bear with us and we will try to make amends for this deficiency in the superior facilities afforded us for making a good newspaper, in our new and permanent quarters."

The vacated Murdock building down the street was taken over by Count Henri Murat, Horace Greeley's whilom barber, as a saloon and poolroom. It was remodeled into "one of the finest frame structures in the city" and subsequently became known as the Mozart Billiard Hall.

The *News* might be able to build itself a new block and install new machinery, but Byers didn't want anyone to get the wrong impression. He brought out his "plain talk" manner again for the issue of October 25:

There are men in this city who have an idea that the publishing of a newspaper in Denver is an immensely lucrative business. . . . There never was a greater error, as there is not a daily paper out of a thousand that has not been a struggling starveling during the first year or years of its existence. Count up the number of dailies that have sprung up in Denver since its first settlement, only seven years ago, and flickered out for want of support. But one of that number yet remains, and that one has met with reverses that would have made 99 of every 100 men quit the business in disgust. . . . It costs here about \$1200 per week to run a daily newspaper. The voting population of Denver is about 1200. Of these about two-thirds take and pay for a daily paper. . . . Did the *News* depend only on its subscription for support, it could not live a week. To meet current expenses the advertising

patrons must make up the sum which the subscription fails to pay—about \$650. The average number of advertisers in this community is not over 100. These 100 advertisers must pay weekly, to sustain the paper, \$6.50 each, in order to meet the mechanical and professional labor required in its columns. . . . The great majority are below that sum. When business is flush the paper makes a fair profit; when it is dull no firm quicker feels the pressure than the newspaper . . . The News is barely established on a paying basis, after seven years of struggle. . . .

Professor Goldrick now had departed Denver and the *News* staff on his temporary editorial mission to the Mormons, and Simpson T. Sopris had joined the Byers and Dailey forces. The name of George West, who helped print the Greeley extra and later published the *Western Mountaineer* in Golden, appears beginning August 14, 1865, as "local" editor of the *News*. He held the post into the next year. Dr. Junius E. Wharton joined the staff May 1 as associate editor, replacing Goldrick, who resigned the same day. Wharton in 1866 wrote and published the first history of Denver, printed for him in the *News* job shop.

Sopris later set down his recollections of Denver newspapering in the late sixties:

Mr. Byers was often in "hot water" because of his nerve in showing up certain of the residents, principally of the sporting element, and had some narrow escapes. I have been in the office with him when men ready and seemingly quite willing to kill him entered and endeavored to provoke a quarrel, but he managed to avoid a shooting affray by keeping his head and standing for all the indignant visitor had to say. Having relieved themselves of a lot of mean words, his callers usually retired and left him with a whole skin.

I had one experience with an indignant citizen that cured me of any further desire to provoke hostilities. Across the street from the *News* office, on Larimer street, was some vacant ground, part of which was used as a wood yard. The wood was delivered to purchasers in a wagon drawn by one horse and that horse was the thinnest animal I had ever seen. Standing in the sun he wouldn't throw a shadow, and no X-ray was needed to show what was inside his hide. That horse got on my nerves. Sitting at the "local" desk, facing the front of the office, every time I looked up and out I could see the poor beast, and the sight unfitted me for the work I had to do, which was inventing items for the local column.

Finally one day I perpetrated the following brief reference to the unfortunate horse: "There is a man in this town who drives a horse that is so poor the owner has to tie a knot in his, the horse's, tail to keep the animal from slipping through the collar." That was all, but it proved amply sufficient. Any elaboration would have been a waste of printer's ink. The item appeared in the morning issue the following day. In the afternoon of that day, while at my desk, I happened to

look out on the street and noticed the owner of the aforesaid horse coming toward the office. In his right hand was a gun, one that seemed to me to be unnecessarily large, and the manner in which he swung the gun, and the more or less uncertainty of his steps, indicated that he had taken aboard a full cargo of "pizen," which happened to be the case. Mr. Dailey was in the front of the office working on the books, and it suddenly occurred to me that two of us were not needed in the office just then, so, grabbing my hat, I slipped quietly out the back door. Returning an hour or so later, I learned from my friend Dailey that he had had a lot of trouble quieting the excited visitor, who had been induced to depart after promising to shoot me full of holes the first time he caught me on the street. And I was admonished to let up on such "personal" items, or else stick around and fight my own battles. . . .⁵

Sopris left the *News* in 1871 to join Clarence E. Hagar, a former compositor for Byers and Dailey, in the publication of the *Daily City Item*, later to become the *Daily Times*, a pillar of Denver journalism for a half century.

When Dr. Wharton resigned from the *News* in May of 1867 to become one of the founders of the *Colorado Miner* in the new silver camp of Georgetown, his post as associate editor was filled by William Russell Thomas, a young reporter fresh from the *Chicago Tribune*. Thomas was a nephew of William Bross, one of the *Tribune* proprietors, who gave him a letter of introduction to Byers. He soon cemented the relationship and became the editor's brother-in-law by marrying Elizabeth Byers' sister Flora. Thomas remained with the *News*, off and on, until 1904, when he became a history professor at Colorado A&M College in Fort Collins.

Byers, Sopris, and Thomas all helped entertain Bayard Taylor, the New York *Tribune's* crack travel reporter, when he visited Colorado in 1866. Sopris showed him the agricultural progress in the Denver area, Byers guided him over Berthoud Pass and through Middle Park to Breckenridge, where their host was a Mr. Sutherland, a peripatetic bugler who claimed to have sounded the signal for the charge of the light brigade at Balaklava. Mr. Sutherland favored the travelers with a rendition of "Peas upon a trencher," Taylor wrote.⁶ The trumpeter also set a good table, including oyster soup. The *Tribune* writer described Byers as "an accomplished mountaineer, to whom much of the ground is familiar, and I preferred taking his advice to that of others who spoke from hearsay rather than experience." He also commented that the *News* editor's "love of trout would lead him to fish even in Bitter Creek." After a month's adventuring in the wilds Byers escorted Taylor back through South Park to Denver. Thomas then took him up to Boulder

⁵*Trail*, Vol. VII, No. 7 (Dec. 1914), pp. 20-21.

⁶Bayard Taylor, *Colorado: A Summer Trip* (New York, 1867), p. 112.

Valley, where Taylor lectured in the since disappeared town of Valmont.

Others on the *News* editorial staff in this era included Ovando J. Hollister, author of the bold history of the 1st Colorado Regiment, who joined the force in 1866 and became associate editor in 1868 and 1869; Joseph E. Hood, the imaginative inventor of the underground-river sensation, 1869-70; "Deacon" John Walker, city editor in 1867; Marcus E. Ward; and Charles E. Harrington, city editor 1870-74 and author of *Summering in Colorado*.

Following purchase of the *Commonwealth* in 1864, the *News* had the Denver newspaper field to itself for nearly a year until the closing days of the Civil War. With no local papers to quarrel with, it had to reach up into the mountains to the Black Hawk *Journal* for an adversary in the bellicose tradition which was ritual with nineteenth-century editors. The two papers spent a happy season exchanging insults on the calling out of a militia and the statehood campaign of 1864, the *Journal* allied with the antis and not at all sure Colorado was ready to govern herself, and the *News* strongly committed to the pros, the Evans-Chivington-Byers crowd. But somehow the scrap lacked the full-bodied flavor which had characterized the pleasantries between the *News* and Gibson's *Era*.

On May 13, 1865, however, Frederick J. Stanton came forth with the first number of the *Daily Denver Gazette*. Byers and Dailey sold Stanton the equipment he needed to get started and even furnished him paper on credit. It was good again to have a contemporary near at hand for sparring purposes. What was even better, the *Gazette* announced itself as a Democratic sheet. The *News* pushed its hat over one eye, hitched up its britches, and slapped a chip on its shoulder. The *Gazette* promptly became "the morning Pollywog of this city," and Stanton was a Copperhead.

Byers got more than he bargained for this time. Fred Stanton came up behind him in the street one morning and clipped him on the head with a stout hickory cane.

The *News* for September 15 and 16, 1865, gives details of the dirty deed. No effort was spared to martyr the fallen editor.

. . . The spirit that animated the cowardly brute who made this dastardly attack is the same that animated John Wilkes Booth in his attack that made desolate the hearts of the American people, only that the would be assassin in this instance, lacks the courage of his teacher (Booth) in copperheadism. . . .

The *News* had been attacking the *Gazette* for its politics and its not entirely enthusiastic attitude toward the heroes of Sand Creek, but the precipitating factor appears to have been a charge that Stanton had lifted mail from Postmaster Byers' post office. On the morning of September

15, Byers was bidding farewell to a group of friends about to depart by coach for the States. The *News* that afternoon reported that Stanton, "coming up behind him, dealt him a heavy blow with a hickory cane, severing the left temporal artery, and inflicting a severe and dangerous wound." As Byers went down the enraged *Gazette* proprietor laid on with several more blows. The article continued with a review of Stanton's despicable ingratitude in the matter of the sale to him of former *News* equipment and paper supplies. Moreover the paper was "in part unpaid for and the bill uncollectable."

Byers noted in his diary: "Was attacked by Stanton this A.M. & badly hurt." Next day, however, he was "able to get to the P.O." He also was able to write a lengthy personal version of the affair for his paper, thanking the many friends who rallied to his support and explaining that he never carried a gun because he was not proficient in the use of firearms. He had not been able to hit back, he went on, because he was "incapacitated for fist fighting by a wound received years ago."

Stanton soon learned that it was perilous to let editorial forensics become physical violence—particularly if a pioneer and first citizen were the victim. One didn't play the newspaper game by those rules. The town rallied immediately to Byers' side. Advertisers withdrew their support of the *Gazette*. The City Council, which in a moment of misplaced generosity had made Stanton's journal the official city paper, pulled back all municipal printing from the *Gazette* job shop. And the crowning blow fell when Typographical Union No. 49 expelled Stanton from his honorary membership.

The *Gazette* died a lingering death in May of 1869, given away free at the end.

Life was not all attacks and attacking for Byers. (In fact, considering the vehemence of some of the items his paper published, it's amazing that he was not more frequently caned.) There were also mountaineering and distinguished visitors to be entertained, and often the two could be combined. The visit of Bayard Taylor has been mentioned. His *Tribune* colleague, Albert D. Richardson, came back again and was struck by the changes in the town. The postwar railroad expansion and the peace which now lay upon the land greatly encouraged writers and adventurous spirits to journey out to see what the wild West was like.

One such was Henry M. Stanley, the English orphan-wanderer who had served on both sides in the American Civil War and would win a knighthood for finding Livingstone in darkest Africa. Stanley came to Denver in 1866 as a space-rate correspondent for the *St. Louis Missouri Republican*. He was one of the few men in Western history to make the Platte a navigable waterway. When his lifelong wanderlust seized him again and it was time to leave Denver, he and W. H. Cook built themselves a flat-bottomed skiff, loaded it with provisions and arms to fight off hostiles, and pushed it into the South Platte at the height of

its May run. They made it through to Omaha with no trouble from the red man, although their boat twice capsized on the voyage. The following year—he had been to Turkey and been captured by brigands in the meantime—Stanley was back in the American West as special writer at fifteen dollars a week for the St. Louis *Democrat*, attached to General Winfield Scott Hancock's expedition against the Indians.

Stanley saw little military action against the tribes but participated in many councils and much treaty making. In his reminiscences he records the speech of one chieftain in answer to the general's plea that the Indian should settle down to agricultural calm:

I love the land and the buffalo, and will not part with them. I don't want any of those medicine houses [schools] built in the country; I want the papooses brought up exactly as I am. I have word that you intend to settle us on a reservation near the mountains. I don't want to settle there. I love to roam over the wide prairie, and, when I do it, I feel free and happy; but, when we settle down, we grow pale and die.⁷

Stanley met and interviewed Wild Bill Hickok, who said he had already killed over a hundred men, all for good cause. Also attached to the Hancock expedition was a five-year-old Indian boy, orphaned at Sand Creek. The child had been exhibited with the Wilson & Graham circus and may have been one of the forlorn young captives brought to Denver after the battle and placed on show in the Denver Theater. As a result of his circus connections the boy had been named Wilson Graham, and Stanley found him "a boy of extraordinary intelligence . . . [who] shows the true spirit of the savage by drawing his jack-knife on anyone who attempts to correct him."

When Hancock's mission ended Stanley stayed on in the West to report the activities of William Tecumseh Sherman's peace commission for the New York *Herald*. Later in 1867 he again visited Denver and toured the mining regions. He apparently was caught up in the fever of the day and went off to scratch in the streams for gold of his own. He returned to his hotel with his carpetbag full of shining particles. One of his pieces of treasure he showed to a bearded miner in the bar. The man rolled the nugget over in his fingers. "Pretty nice specimen of iron pyrites you got there."

Another visitor to Denver was the German-born landscape artist, Albert Bierstadt, who had created a stir in art circles by selling a painting for twenty-five thousand dollars. Editor Byers of the *News* helped him find the scenic subject for a 12-by-7-foot canvas that later went for thirty-five thousand dollars: *Storm in the Rocky Mountains—Mount Rosalie*.

⁷Quoted by Byron Farwell, *The Man Who Presumed* (New York, 1957), p. 32.

Byers told of how the artist got his picture on a pack trip south from the present town of Idaho Springs:

. . . He came to Denver in search of a subject for a great Rocky Mountain picture, and was referred to me—probably because I had the reputation of being something of a mountain tramp. . . . It was a gloomy day in the dense forest. I was ahead, the pack animals following. . . . At a certain point the trail emerged from the timber and all the beauty, the grandeur and sublimity of the great gorge and the rugged amphitheatre and its head would open to view in an instant, like the rolling up of a curtain. . . . When I rode out into the flower-decked meadow I turned aside so as to be out of the line of vision. . . . Bierstadt emerged leisurely. His enthusiasm had been badly dampened; but when he caught the view fatigue and hunger were forgotten. His face became a picture of intense excitement. . . . He slid off his mule, glanced quickly to see where the jack was that carried his paint outfit, walked sideways to it and began fumbling at the lash-ropes, all the time keeping his eyes on the scene up the valley. "I must get a study in colors; it will only take me fifteen minutes!" He said nothing more . . . and at length the sketch was finished. "There—was I more than fifteen minutes?" I answered: "Yes—you were at work forty-five minutes, by my watch."⁸

The peak Bierstadt painted was named Mount Rosalie for his wife, but the name didn't stick. It is now Mount Evans. The 14,260-foot eminence on Denver's immediate western horizon was renamed for Byers' friend and patron, Governor John Evans. The name "Rosalie" was transferred to a lesser (13,575-foot) mountain to the southeast, and the name "Bierstadt" was given to a 14,046-foot summit to the southwest, connected with Mount Evans by a ridge above a glacial cirque which holds Lake Abyss.

Before leaving Denver, Bierstadt presented his hostess with one of his paintings of the Mohawk Valley, and for years thereafter Lib Byers was telling Denver women's clubs how the great artist had insisted she "criticize" his work and how he was her "intimate friend."

After the color sketch was made Byers and Bierstadt climbed to the top of Mount Rosalie. It was only one such ascent for the far-ranging *News* editor. He was more than just a "mountain tramp" or a guide for tourists. He was the Rockies' original alpinist, the first specimen of that hardy breed of men who toil to the summits of peaks in order, as one of them explains, "to get to the top," or, as another says, "because they're there."

In the summer of 1864, Byers set out with an ornithologist friend, Dr. Jacob W. Velie, to challenge 14,255-foot Long's Peak, the northern-

⁸William N. Byers, "Bierstadt's Visit to Colorado," *Magazine of Western History*, Jan. 1890; quoted by Harold McCracken, *Portrait of the Old West* (New York, 1952), p. 141.

most high pinnacle on the Denver sky line. Although it had stood as a guidepost for explorers and fur traders for a half century or longer, Long's had never been climbed and was popularly regarded as unscalable. Byers was the type of man who had to find out for himself. He and Dr. Velie reached Estes Park on August 17 and spent the next night high above timberline on the north side of the peak.

The following day they set out to climb what Byers incorrectly regarded as the highest mountain in the United States. The mountain turned them back. They made it to the top of the "east peak"—possibly Mount Meeker or a 13,456-foot summit later named Velie's Peak and now known as Storm Peak—and Byers told his diary the main summit was "inaccessible."

Byers gave readers of the *News* a report on the expedition in the September 22 issue:

. . . Having failed to find a route of ascent from the northwest, we had agreed this morning [August 20] to strike for the southeastern foot and ascend the eastern peak, hoping thereby to reach the main peak, though all had failed who went that way before us. When seemingly almost to the immediate point of ascent, Mr. Nichols and the writer, who were in advance, came suddenly upon the brink of a stupendous chasm, half a mile in width and fully as much in depth, which ran plump up against the vertical face of the main Peak,—its source or head abutting square up against or into the very heart of the loftiest mountain in the United States; in its stupendous proportions and sublime grandeur, it can hardly be equalled and certainly not excelled. . . . But by halfpast 9 o'clock we were on the summit of the east peak as high as anyone has ever gone. We added our names to the five registered before, and upon a careful survey concluded that we were as far as man can go. Another point three or four hundred feet distant was even inaccessible, whilst the main or west peak still towered hundreds of feet above our heads presenting sheer precipitous sides, and a smooth rounded summit upon which it looked as though a man must be tied to remain, if ever by any miracle he could reach it. . . .

Four years later to the day another party set out from Grand Lake to the west of the mountain to try it from an unexplored direction. Byers tells the story in the *News* of September 1, 1868:

. . . *August 20.* The party destined for the ascent of Long's Peak, consisting of Major J. W. Powell [soon to explore the Grand Canyon], W. H. Powell [a brother], L. W. Keplinger, Sam'l Garman [later a Harvard professor and assistant to the great Alexander Agassiz], Ned E. Farrell, John C. Sumner [Byers' brother-in-law] and the writer, left camp at the west side of Grand Lake, each mounted, and with one pack mule for the party. . . . Each man carried his bedding under

or behind his saddle, a pistol in his belt, and those not encumbered with instruments, took their guns. We had two barometers and two sets of thermometers.

Crossing the Grand [River] where it leaves the lake, we made one half its circuit, around the northern shore, through a dense mass of brush and fallen timber, and at a point directly opposite our camp on the eastern shore, began the ascent of the mountains. . . .

Turning away from the lake at right angles, we followed up a sharp, narrow ridge, very steep, rocky and almost impassable on account of the fallen timber. Progress was necessarily slow, and we were full three hours making the first four miles. Then we entered green timber and got along much faster. In about seven miles from the starting point we reached the limit of timber growth and wound along the crest of the sharp, rocky ridge which forms the divide between before mentioned [affluents of Grand Lake]. The route is very rough and tortuous. On either side, thousands of feet below, are chains of little lakes, dark and solitary-looking in their inaccessibility. About five miles from the timber line we camped for the night, turning down, for that purpose to the edge of the timber on our right. The barometer showed an altitude of about 11,500 feet, and the frost was quite sharp.

August 21. Our start was over much the same kind of country traversed in the afternoon yesterday; skirting around the side of a very lofty mountain; clambering over broken rocks, or climbing up or down to get around impassable ledges. In some places we pass over great snow banks, which are really the best traveling we find. At the end of a mile we came to an impassable precipice which subsequent exploration proved to extend from the summit of the mountain on the left down to the stream on our right, and thence down parallel with it. We spent the day in searching for a place to get down or around it, but without success, and were compelled to go into camp, like the night before, at the timber line. We had proved one thing, that horses and mules could go no further, and we made preparations for proceeding on foot. The animals were turned loose to feed on the short, young grass of the mountain side; the trail by which we came down being barricaded by a few loose stones and a pole or two to prevent their going back. Escape in any other direction was impossible.

August 22. We were off at 7 o'clock; each man with biscuit and bacon in his pockets for two day's rations. One or two carried blankets, but most preferred doing without carrying them. Arms were also left behind. After some search a place was found where we descended the precipice—not without risk—then crossed a little valley, just at the timber line, and began the ascent over the range directly over a huge mountain which had the appearance of extending quite to Long's Peak. Gaining its summit, we found ourselves still further from our destination than we supposed we were the day before. Descending its precipitous northern face—which upon looking back appeared utterly impassable—we followed for a mile along a very low ridge, which is the real dividing range—then turned eastward along a similar ridge, which

connects Long's Peak with the range. It has been generally supposed that great mountain was a part of the range, though occupying an acute angle in it, but such is not the case. It is not less than two miles from the range, and all its waters flow toward the Atlantic. Following up this ridge, it soon culminated in a very lofty mountain [Chief's Head, visible from Denver], only a few hundred feet lower than Long's but with a crest so narrow that some of the party became dizzy in traveling along it. This, we supposed would lead to the great mountain, but found the route cut off by impassable chasms.

There remained but one route—to descend to the valley and climb again all that we had already twice made. Turning to the right, we clambered down with infinite labor to the valley of a branch of [the] St. Vrain, where we went into camp at the extreme timber line [in Wild Basin]. Some explorations were made, however, preparatory to the morrow's labor; the most important by Mr. Keplinger, who ascended to within about eight hundred feet of the summit, and did not return until after dark. We became very uneasy about him, fearing that he would be unable to make his way down in safety. A man was sent to meet him, and bonfires kindled on some high rocks near us. An hour after they came in; Mr. K. with the report that the ascent might be possible, but he was not very sanguine. The night was a most cheerless one, with gusts of wind and sprinkles of rain; our only shelter under the side of an immense boulder, where we shivered the long hours through.

August 23. Unexpectedly the day dawned fair, and at six o'clock we were facing the mountain. Approaching from the south our course was over a great rockslide and then up a steep gorge down which the broken stone had come. In many places it required the assistance of hands as well as feet to get along, and the ascent at best was very laborious. There was no extraordinary obstacle until within seven or eight hundred feet of the summit. Above that point the mountain presents the appearance, in every direction, of being a great block of granite, perfectly smooth and unbroken. Close examination, however, removed this delusion in some degree, and we were most agreeably surprised to find a passable way, though it required great caution, coolness, and infinite labor to make headway; life often depending upon a grasp of the fingers in a crevice that would hardly admit them. Before ten o'clock the entire party stood upon the extreme summit without accident or mishap of any kind. The Peak is a nearly level surface, paved with irregular blocks of granite, and without vegetation of any kind, except a little gray lichen. The outline is nearly a parallelogram—east and west—widening a little toward the western extremity, and five or six acres in extent. . . .

Barometric and thermometric observations were taken to determine altitude, and a monument erected to commemorate our visit. A record of the event with notes of the instrumental readings was deposited in the monument, and from a flag-staff on its summit a flag was unfurled and left floating in the breeze. . . .

Today Long's Peak is climbed each summer by thousands of mountaineers, expert and inexperienced, of all ages and sexes, by a route which virtually circles the top of the mountain to reach the couloir Byers' party climbed. Long's today is a popular mountain with both tourists and natives. But in 1868 its first ascent was a mountaineering victory of classic proportions. The Swiss Matterhorn had been climbed only three years earlier.

Wallace Stegner, in his valuable analysis of John Wesley Powell's role in the winning of the West, appends a few additional details on the climb. It was the frontiersman, John Sumner, who got dizzy on the ridge, Stegner discovered, while the tenderfeet of Powell's scientific party clambered merrily on and up. Sumner at one point sat down, spat into space, and declared: "By God, I haven't lost any mountain." He was persuaded to go on, but he "got down and cooned it."

Sober-sided Sam Garman, a Quaker, wrote back to his girl friend in Bloomington, Indiana:

After a pretty hard climb we did it, built a monument on the top, raised a flag, threw some wine on the monument & the little that remained in the bottle was drank by 5 of the party. 2 of us withstanding all entreaties did not drink on Long's peak, whatever the papers may say to the contrary.

Stegner comments: "Garman does not name his fellow abstainer, nor say who took the trouble (it could only have been Byers) to carry a bottle of wine through two strenuous days of scrambling over cliffs and ridges."⁹

Stegner also offers his slant on Byers as a man and personality: "Energetic, literate, sanguine, Byers was an ardent sportsman, a keen fisherman. While Durlay and Allen and others of Powell's party threshed the waters of Grand River and a dozen creeks in vain, Byers caught all the fish he could carry. . . . Byers was a pioneer, an opener, a pass-croser of a pure American breed, one for whom an untrodden peak was a rebuke and a shame to an energetic people. . . ."

The Byers-Powell victory is hailed as the first conquest of Long's, although there is some indication, almost in the realm of legend, that the Indians got there earlier. The Arapahoes told Oliver W. Toll in 1913 that one of their elders, named Gun, maintained an eagle trap atop the peak as early as 1858. Gun, they said, dug a hole up there and would lie in wait, baiting for the eagles with a stuffed coyote scented with tallow. When an eagle descended to strike the coyote old Gun

⁹Stegner, *op. cit.*, pp. 26-29; for other accounts see also William N. Byers, "First Ascent of Long's Peak", *Trail*, Vol. VII, No. 5 (Oct. 1914), pp. 21ff; William Culp Darrah, *Powell of the Colorado* (Princeton, 1951), pp. 97-102; John L. Jerome Hart, *Fourteen Thousand Feet* (Denver, 1931) pp. 32-34; and Levette J. Davidson, "The Letters of William N. Byers," *Denver Westerners Brand Book*: 1952 (Denver, 1953), pp. 212-16.

would reach out of his hole and grab the bird by the legs. Griswold, Gun's son, said his father also had a magic herb no one else knew anything about. Applied to a captive eagle, it would cause the bird to have a fit and become helpless. Gun used the eagle feathers to make war bonnets. Byers reported his expedition found no evidence of any such trap.

The victory over Long's Peak was by no means Byers' last mountain-climbing jaunt. Throughout his life he was always ready to head for the top of the nearest hill on the slightest provocation, even though hampered by a rupture which forced him to wear a truss from young manhood. On August 14, 1901, at the age of seventy, he was suffering from rheumatism and sciatica and was drenching himself with such medicaments as Honyadi water, Bishop's citrate of magnesia, malt whiskey, and belladonna, and he had but two more years to live; but he was still able to climb up and unfurl another flag on the top of the 13,000-foot peak named for him.

Byers Peak is a noble and picturesque mountain to the southeast of Middle Park, beyond Berthoud Pass. Bierstadt painted his Mount Rosalie, and Byers Peak has been captured in oils by another notable artist, Dwight David Eisenhower. President Eisenhower painted the mountain in 1953 when he maintained his "summer White House" in Denver. The peak looks down a high green valley directly on the Fraser ranch of Denver banker Aksel Nielsen, where Ike fished for trout and took recreation from his box of colors.

As a "pass-crosser" Byers was particularly interested in the lofty gap bearing the name "Berthoud," over which President Eisenhower shuttled in 1953 on a fine paved highway and through which Bayard Taylor toiled in June 1866, fighting snow up to his horse's belly. The pass crosses the Continental Divide at an elevation of 11,316 feet, close to timberline, and it has become a favorite skiing area for thousands of winter-sports enthusiasts each season.

In the 1860s the *News* editor was morally and intellectually convinced to the very heart of his large booster instincts that Berthoud Pass offered *the* route for the transcontinental railroad. He had a mass of figures on grades and elevations to prove that—with the little matter of a three-mile tunnel under the apex of the pass—palace cars soon could roll from coast to coast through his city of Denver and also, conveniently, through his private Elysium, Middle Park.

Byers built large-sized dreams for his park, once he got control of the Utes' warm medicinal springs. An era of spas and fashionable watering places was developing, and he pictured a great tourist center rising from his ranch with its fortunate pools of steaming water. Byers was genuinely in love with the almost heartbreaking beauty of his peak-ringed mountain paradise, and he saw no reason why many others shouldn't be similarly impressed. He had scientific analyses made of the mineral content of

the hot spring waters. Once the Civil War was over he joined the enormous pilgrimage of tourists to the principal battlefields and historic places, but he also took time to visit the spas of the South, closely observing how they had been built and how they were operated. He brought back volumes of literature and comparative mineral-content analyses which showed that his springs were the equal of any, and better than most, in chemical capacity to provide salubrious benison for a long list of socially acceptable illnesses. He put up a sawmill, personally surveyed and staked out the town of Hot Sulphur Springs, erected a small log hotel as a starter and a concrete bathhouse beside the pools. He was in business. Season passes for healing baths were issued to Colorado notables and fellow editors who might plug the project in their columns. For many years Byers' pocket diaries carry a meticulous accounting of "bath money" income ranging from a few cents to forty or fifty dollars a day during the "season." But Hot Sulphur Springs never developed quite the way Byers planned that it should, though he stubbornly clung to his spa—to the great exasperation of his financially acute wife—through a series of five-figure offers for the property.

So Byers was not entirely disinterested in his efforts, backed by the full editorial might of his *News*, to drag a railroad over the awesome Berthoud Pass heights. The pass was the one feasible gateway to Hot Sulphur Springs. Yet his interest was not entirely a selfish one either. His town of Denver desperately wanted and needed a railroad, and the only chance that the city could be put on the main line lay in selection of the Berthoud route.

Trail-blazing Jim Bridger had come down from Wyoming in 1861 to help E. L. Berthoud, a Golden City civil engineer, survey a stage road west from Denver for the Central Overland California & Pike's Peak Express Company (sometimes irreverently referred to by the pioneers as the Clear Out of Cash & Poor Pay). Berthoud found his pass, and a rough road was laid out extending through some four hundred miles of wilderness to Provo, Utah.

By 1862 talk of the Pacific railroad was growing. Denver raised a fund by popular subscription to try to find a way that would route the railroad through the Rockies instead of around them. Byers and F. M. Case, another engineer, were sent out in June on a preliminary reconnaissance. They probed up and along Berthoud's route and returned with a report that, while the grade was a bit steep in spots, it was a practicable proposition. Case was sent back to the mountains on July 24, the day Congress passed the Pacific railroad bill, to gather the statistics to support Denver's case.

The Union Pacific wanted to build through Denver. It was the only sizable town between Omaha and Salt Lake, and its prospects seemed good, now that war was over. Careful consideration was given to Case's

report. But the logical decision was made: the transcontinental line would go over 7534-foot Bridger's Pass in Wyoming.

When General Grenville M. Dodge, chief engineer of the Union Pacific, announced the decision, Denver was plunged into gloom and despair. Within a short time Cheyenne, which would be on the main line, boomed to a city of 2000 to 3000 persons. Many Denver businesses pulled up stakes and moved north. The railroad town obviously would become the new metropolis of the Rocky Mountain West. Cheyenne's sponsors offered Byers a substantial inducement to move his paper to the future Wyoming capital. He refused, and sent a correspondent instead. The *News*, smarting under the Union Pacific's highhanded rebuke to its city, was infuriated by a taunt from a Cheyenne gazette that "Denver now is too dead to bury."

Dodge's report choosing the Bridger's Pass route recommended that a branch line be built a hundred miles south to Denver from Cheyenne, and the hint was that the Union Pacific would build it. But, watching the furore kicked up by the decision in railroad-eager Denver, the financiers decided on another course. They gauged the city's desire for a rail line, which was enormous, and weighed this against the probable financial resources of the village, which were rather more than might have been expected. Then they began shuffling their feet. It was going to be impossible, after all, for the Union Pacific to build the branch line. But if Denver could acquire and grade the line and put down the ties, perhaps they would be able to find the rails and then would co-operate by taking over the branch and running it. The maneuver was only the first of many by which railroad builders, foreign and domestic, would milk the little town of Denver, hurt in pride and prestige and now sure that everything it hoped to be was bound up in the immediate acquisition of a railroad. The coolheaded railroad financiers, free of emotional entanglements of the "our fair city" order, sat back and watched. It worked.

Denver held a couple of mass meetings in the fall of 1867 and subscribed five hundred thousand dollars for the grading, bridging, and tie laying. Byers' friend, Governor John Evans, was the prime mover, and the *News* editor was dealt into the inner circle on his value as promoter and booster. Byers whooped into the build-up with characteristic vigor and civic patriotism, not seeming to notice things were so arranged that he would not participate with the others in the probable profits of future railroading. The *News* spared no adjectives in its promotion of the Denver Pacific bond issue, and the city voted it by a large majority in January 1868.

No delay was permitted to dim the bright plans for the Denver Pacific. Ties began floating down the Platte to be caught in a boom rigged across the river at the foot of F (Fifteenth) Street. The Union Pacific then discovered conveniently that it could supply forty thousand ties

at a dollar each, the *News* reported with naïve jubilation on April 27, 1868.

On May 18, 1868, ground was broken. The scene was about three miles northeast of the main business section, and the town turned out. "This auspicious event, the most important in its bearings on the future of Colorado of any that ever transpired in her history, took place today with appropriate ceremonies," the *News* heralded that afternoon.

At 11:15 A.M. the Denver Band struck up "The St. Louis Quickstep" and two teams began plowing a pair of furrows. Lyman Cole and Thomas G. Anderson achieved local immortality by handling the reins of the teams. In a gesture to the fair sex, Miss Nettie Clark and Mrs. F. G. Stanton were permitted to tuck up their voluminous skirts ever so slightly and guide the plows for a few symbolic feet. General John Pierce, president of the Denver Pacific, proposed three cheers for the ladies, and the response, the *News* said gallantly, was deafening.

Billy Marchant opened a keg of lager beer, which soon disappeared. Then, as the band played "The Philadelphia March", John W. Smith, first president of the new Denver Board of Trade, threw precisely nine shovelfuls of earth on the grade. Former Governor Gilpin climbed up in a wagon and delivered himself of "one of his remarkable speeches", Byers says in his history of Colorado. General Pierce also spoke, and the band closed the proceedings with a lively reading of "The Railroad Gallop", which everyone thought was so appropriate. By nightfall a mile of the grading had been finished.

The *News* was sure this would be a model railroad in every respect. "A map of the grade line can hardly be distinguished from the ground line, there is so little variation. It is said to be better than the route from St. Petersburg to Moscow, so famous for its natural grade line."

Work went merrily along, and the Union Pacific concluded it had gravely underestimated the down which could be plucked from the goose. Suddenly, in July 1869, it developed that the UP would be unable to iron the road or supply the rolling stock it had promised. Perhaps Denver could help out again? A great new era was being fashioned, and Denver certainly wouldn't want to be shut out of its rightful place in the sun. No, indeed, Denver agreed, and dug down for another million dollars in bonds.

Denver might have kept its shirt on. There was traffic to be had in the Colorado capital and its tributary mining regions, and the railroads wanted it. The Kansas Pacific, cousin germane of the big main line, was building rapidly across the Kansas plains, headed straight for Denver, although it feinted toward Golden City and the Arkansas Valley in an effort to tap the community support the UP had found so generous. The Kansas Pacific tried to get two million dollars out of Denver, but the effort failed. The KP was too closely linked with the railroad manipula-

Denver had just won the territorial capital back from Golden in 1867, and it did not propose to give the rival foothills city anything but the back of its hand.

The Union Pacific's Irish terriers met the Central Pacific's imported Chinese tracklayers at Promontory Point in Utah, and on May 10, 1869, the gold spike supplied by Leland Stanford was tapped down to complete the first coast-to-coast rail network. A race meanwhile had developed between the Denver and Kansas Pacific lines to see who could get the first rail into Denver. Prodigious feats of track construction were chalked up, a mile and more in a day, under conditions scarcely conducive to undistracted labors.

On May 14, 1870, the *News* reported, Indians in small bands of five to ten braves struck simultaneously at ten different points along the Kansas Pacific near Kit Carson, killed eleven graders, wounded nineteen, and herded four hundred head of stock ahead of them when they rode off. General Custer was dispatched from Fort Wallace to chase them. Cavalry and infantry were detailed to patrol the construction area.

Up in Nebraska an Indian tried to rope a Union Pacific locomotive, passing at forty miles an hour. The brave made the mistake of tying one end of his lariat around his waist. He managed to get a loop over the smokestack. "All that was left to bury was a small piece of copper-colored flesh tied to the rope."¹⁰

On the Kansas Pacific, now just east of Denver, it was found necessary to carry a dog on each engine and send him ahead to drive the "wild Texas cattle" off the track.¹¹ The longhorns were moving north; the age of the cowboy and the open range was starting.

The Denver Pacific won the race. On June 17, 1870, the construction locomotive was "in plain sight . . . from the roof of the *News* Block." A last-minute shortage of track developed, but the *News* said on June 20: "Tomorrow brings it into the city if the iron holds out. Then three times three and a Tiger!" On the twenty-second, the first locomotive, garlanded with streamers and flags, entered the town. It was named the *General D. H. Moffat, Jr.*, for the man who had been Byers' companion on the day of the shooting in Omaha. Moffat had followed Byers out to Denver, began business as a stationer and bookseller, and went on to great wealth in mining, real estate, banking, and railroad building.

June 24 was appointed as a day of ceremony and celebration. The miners up in the "Silver Queen" city of Georgetown sent word they would supply a silver spike to complete the railroad.

The *News* of that date required four front-page columns to do the great event justice. There was a mounted parade through town by the

¹⁰*Rocky Mountain News*, Nov. 8, 1870.

¹¹*Ibid.*, June 7, 1870.

Masons. Episcopal Bishop George W. Randall laid the cornerstone for a depot. After the orations Governor Evans descended from the pilot of the *D. H. Moffat, Jr.*, and drove the last spike. A last-moment substitution had been necessary.

Billy Barton, proprietor of the Barton House in Georgetown, had brought the silver spike down to Denver but the night before had been overwhelmed by the spirit of the occasion. He got drunk, pawned the spike, and still was sleeping it off when the ceremony was under way at noon. When he failed to show up Sam E. Browne, territorial attorney general, picked up an iron spike, wrapped a piece of white paper around it, and handed it to Evans: "Here's the silver spike from Georgetown, with the compliments of the people of Clear Creek County." The happy crowd apparently didn't notice the sleight of hand, or didn't care. Later Evans retrieved the silver spike from the pawnshop, and it now rests in the Colorado State Museum.

The Kansas Pacific, building from both east and west, completed its line on August 15 near the present town of Strasburg, thirty-eight miles east of Denver. The two construction gangs laid down ten and a quarter miles of track in nine hours. Denver now had two railroads; the cup of civic pride ran over at the brim.

With everything up to date in Denver, the *News* could afford a little nostalgia. On the night of August 18 a stagecoach swayed into town behind two spans of mules, Steve Harmon at the reins. It was the last of the overland stages from the East, and the *News* sang its swan song next day:

. . . We wish to bear witness to the amount of capital required, and the pluck, energy and enterprise displayed in the running and management of these lines of travel which the railroads now unceremoniously shove off the theater of the present into the dead past. For eleven years these coaches have been running with a regularity unparalleled. They were our only means of public transportation.

While we yield full praise to the companies, there is another group of men to whom greater credit is due, still higher respect for services performed: the stagecoach employees who took the risks of heat, cold and Indians—road agents who, by the power of their endurance, made the overland stages a success.

As the traveler glides over the iron rails in the luxurious palace cars he sees where many a brave fellow met his fate from the bullet or arrow of a foe and fell true to duty with a death-grip on his reins. It was he who braved and dared so much on the lonely plains of Kansas and Colorado in pioneering the way for the trains in which we now ride.

Their occupation is gone. The bright stages will soon be dusty, the shining harness rusty, the handsome, prancing four-in-hands descended to the position of farmhorses or draft-horses. The overland boys will be scattered. . . .

. . . An all-Pullman palace-car excursion train will leave St. Louis for Denver on Aug. 30. . . . On and after Sept. 1 trains of the Kansas Pacific will arrive in Denver at 5:00 o'clock in the morning and depart at 9:00 o'clock at night. . . .

Denver now began to grow as never before. It had a population of 4759 in 1870 as the railroads were putting down their last spikes. By 1880 the census stood at 35,629. In its first full month of operation the Denver Pacific brought 1067 passengers to Denver and carried thirteen million pounds of freight.

The Colorado Central Railroad was built down Clear Creek from Golden, and William Jackson Palmer, one of the promoters of the Kansas Pacific, started south with his narrow-gauge Denver & Rio Grande Railroad. Soon Governor Evans would begin sending his Denver, South Park & Pacific up, over, and through the mountains. Byers was fascinated by the light but serviceable narrow-gauge equipment, and he judged it exactly the thing for the mountain country he knew so well. In the *News* for February 5, 1871, he said: "We believe that the Union Pacific, Kansas Pacific and all their tributary lines would be better roads for the country and for their owners if they were narrow gauge 30 inches instead of 56½ inches. They can be built for one-half cost and handle all traffic developed. The D&RG is right in adopting the narrow gauge exclusively for their projected lines." (The gauge actually was thirty-six rather than thirty inches.) In the next couple of decades a score of short-lived railroad companies would drape the little iron around the Colorado peaks. Today a single short stretch of the yard-wide track remains in operation: excursion trains of the miniature cars run each summer between Durango and Silverton in the extreme southwestern corner of the state to carry tourists and a steady stream of rail fans on devout pilgrimage to the scenes of little engines and big men.

It took Denver citizens a while to find out what time it was in the railroad era. The Denver Pacific ran its trains on a schedule thirty-five minutes faster than Denver time. The KP ran fifty-five minutes ahead. On February 16, 1871, the *News* confessed it was confused:

Jewelers in this city have decided to adopt a system of time that will approach uniformity. They will get Chicago Meridian Time each day by telegraph and regulate their time pieces accordingly. As it is now, every man has his own time and will swear by it. Each watchmaker has his own time and each of the three railroads has its own time. It is enough to puzzle and perplex a saint. Chicago time will be a little fast, but we will get used to it. . . .

The railroad brought Susan B. Anthony for a call and a stirring address to an overflow audience which was "mostly women," the *News* said, on June 24, 1871, though "there were a few brutes in attendance."

The reporter wrote that the petticoat crusader confidently predicted "wars would practically be eliminated as soon as women could vote."

But despite time confusion and fluttering suffragettes, Denver was making rapid progress. A gas works was built, and Denver was illuminated for the first time on the night of January 21, 1871. By April of the same year water mains were being laid and fire hydrants installed. Work had begun in December 1870 on a two-mile street railway system of horsecars, though the cars didn't begin running until a year later. The *News* was agitating on April 20, 1871, for street signs and a uniform system of house numbering. City Council voted not to levy a city tax for 1871 but still was able to grade the town's first boulevard, a hundred-foot roadway west from the Platte and up onto the bluff where Highland perched. The *News* of May 23, 1871, was ecstatic over the view Boulevard F afforded of both mountains and city. "It is estimated that 300 carriages passed over it last Sunday."

The luxury and leisure of the new era also produced a boom in sports. The Kansas Pacific brought the Kit Carson baseball team to town on April 26, 1871, to play the Denver "McCooks" (named for territorial Governor Edward McCook). Denver won 66 to 31, and the *News* sports writer said "the Kit Carson boys threw in the sponge in the ninth inning when Denver had completed 12 runs with no outs." The Central City team was unimpressed. It sent down a challenge backed by a five-hundred-dollar wager.

Along with the city, the *News* was expanding. With completion of the Denver Pacific and accompanying improvement in telegraphic services, the paper found it convenient to switch to morning publication on July 2, 1870. The issue of December 20, 1870, announces expansion to a nine-column format. New equipment and new type were put into the plant.

Yet in spite of all the progress toward a future which looked bright with promise, John Dailey decided to pull out. Possibly he was tired of doing most of the day-to-day work while Byers took the bows and glory, chased off to climb mountains, and dabbled in a dozen enterprises which had nothing to do with meeting daily deadlines and weekly payrolls. At any rate Dailey sold his half interest to his partner. The bill of sale, preserved among the Dailey papers in the Denver Public Library, indicates he took for his half of the *News* the sum of six hundred dollars plus "one bay horse called 'Prince' and one California saddle." The date is October 31, 1870.

Even if Prince were a thoroughbred and the saddle silver-mounted, the low valuation placed on the paper would be hard to understand. Possibly Byers had paid Dailey other sums earlier. Quite probably the presses and other fixtures were heavily encumbered with debt. No mention is made of Dailey having an interest in the *News* Block as a property, and perhaps Byers had built it with his own funds separately from the

partnership. Whatever the explanation, Dailey retired from the *News* with precious little to show for eleven years of faithful service and hard work.

John Dailey was a quiet, unostentatious man, not given much to talking unless spoken to. He was as content to remain in the background as Byers was determined to cut a swath. His name appeared at the head of no civic committees, he is listed on no boards of directors, and he mingled silently if at all with bankers, railroad builders, governors, and financiers. Perhaps he didn't have time for such things; every indication is that Byers kept him busy running the business and supervising the printing plant.

Dailey had built up an operation which, in addition to handling daily and weekly newspapers, could do five-color printing in Indian country in the 1860s. When he left the *News* he stayed with his printing trade. In partnership with Nathan Baker, who had returned to Denver after founding three Wyoming newspapers, and a man named Smart,¹² he operated the job-printing firm of Dailey, Baker & Smart from 1871 to 1873. The firm became Dailey & Smart in 1873 and finally went broke. For a short time in 1872, Dailey and Baker were part owners of the Denver *Daily Times*, having purchased the interest of Andrew J. Boyer for five hundred dollars. At one point or another in the early seventies, four Denver newspapers issued from the Dailey printing office, among them the *Lorgnette*, a theatrical sheet which became the *Daily City Item* and then the *Times*, and the *Colorado Courier*, a semiweekly in German. When Dailey left the *News*, S. T. Sopris took over as Byers' business manager before becoming a partner in the publication of the *Item* and its successor, the *Times*. After Dailey & Smart went on the rocks in 1875—the firm's assets going to Frederick J. Stanton, he of the *Gazette* and the hickory cane—Dailey became briefly the business manager of the Denver *Tribune* beginning in March of that year.

The birth rate of Denver newspapers was high in the glad new age of the Iron Horse, and the death rate was not much lower. Daily and weekly papers and the dates of their appearance were: *Daily Colorado Tribune*, 1867; weekly *Colorado Tribune*, 1867; Goldrick's *Rocky Mountain Herald*, 1868; *Colorado Democrat*, 1868; *Daily Denver Times*, 1868; *Lorgnette*, 1870; *Tribune*, 1871; weekly *Tribune*, 1871; *Daily City Item*, 1871; Denver *Daily Times* (a different outfit entirely from the *Daily Denver Times*), 1872; weekly *Times*, 1873; *Colorado Journal*, 1872; *Western Miner and Engineer*, 1872; weekly *Coloradian*, 1872; *Rocky Mountain Leader*, 1872; *Colorado Real Estate and Mining Review*, 1873; *Colorado Courier*, 1873; Denver *Mirror*, 1873; *Daily Programme*, 1873; *Colorado Agriculturist and Stock Journal*, 1873; *Commercial Advertiser*, 1873; *Colorado Farmer*, 1873; Denver Com-

¹²Probably Charles Willard Smart; see *Colorado Magazine*, Vol. XVI, No. 4 (July 1939), p. 158.

mercial, 1873; *Denver Daily World*, 1873; *Denver Mining Journal*, 1874; *Journal of Commerce*, 1874; daily *Colorado Democrat*, 1874; *Daily Colorado Transcript*, 1875; *Daily Colorado Sentinel*, 1875; weekly *Colorado Sentinel*, 1875; biweekly *Colorado Mining Review*, 1875; *Daily Democrat*, 1876.¹³

Out of all this flurry of energetic publishing, only the *Rocky Mountain News* and Goldrick's weekly *Herald* have survived. During one press-busy period eight daily newspapers were hopefully being printed for the edification of a city under 30,000 in population. Among them, only the *Times*, the *Tribune*, and the *Democrat*—which metamorphosed rather startlingly into the *Republican* in June 1879—showed any staying power, and all of them were eventually purchased by the *News*.

By the winter of 1875-76 the Denver press was in a frenzy reporting preparations for Colorado's statehood. William H. Vischer, late of the Louisville, Kentucky, *Journal*, was city editor of the *News*. One of his reporters was Tom Cannon, the veritable personification of the old-time boomer journalist. Cannon had come West a couple of years earlier as correspondent for the St. Louis *Globe-Democrat* and had helped found the Lake City *Silver World* in June 1875 down in Alfred Packer's Hinsdale County. He moved on up to Denver in the winter and signed on with the *News*.

Cannon covered the constitutional convention which met from December into March of 1876, and when the convention's efforts were overwhelmingly approved by the voters in a July 1 election, Colorado went wild with pride and joy over becoming the thirty-third state. Bonfires were built at street corners in Denver and everyone got howling drunk. A party of enthusiasts set out on July 3 for the top of Pike's Peak with nearly a ton of fireworks, and Tom Cannon went along to give the *News* a firsthand account of the pyrotechnics. It was planned to set off the display at midnight, as the centennial of American independence arrived, but just as it grew dark a rain began to fall on the peak. The rain turned to sleet and then to snow. Cannon wrote later:

We were obliged to walk around in circles to keep from freezing. After two hours of torture we abandoned the program and heaped the fireworks on the summit of the peak. We laid a train of powder and lighted it with matches. Then we fled down the mountain. There was a rush and a roar and a blinding sheet of flame. All our fireworks had gone off at once. But the people of the plains saw nothing of the display.

We groped our way down to where the pack train had camped and spent a most uncomfortable night. Next morning we returned to Colorado Springs, most of us lamenting that we had not voted against the constitution. My newspaper story was highly decorated, but not with flags.¹⁴

¹³McMurtrie and Allen, op. cit., pp. 250-66.

¹⁴Gary, Indiana, *Post-Tribune*, Dec. 2, 1956.

Cannon remained on the *News* staff until November 1879 and was on the scene at Cañon City for the bloodless "Royal Gorge War" in which the Rio Grande and Santa Fe railroads contended with mercenaries and armed survey crews for the route to booming Leadville up through the Royal Gorge of the Arkansas, a defile so narrow and tortuous that it could carry only one set of tracks. The Rio Grande finally won the "war" in the courts after Cannon had departed for other less robust climes. He worked on papers in Kansas City, Arkansas, and Texas, returned to the *News* in 1887-88, went on to Chicago, and finally, in 1909, became editor of the Gary, Indiana, *Evening Post*. His reminiscences appeared serially in the *Gary Post-Tribune* August 19, 1956, to September 1, 1957, following his death in 1936. Cannon remembered Denver journalism during one of its liveliest and most competitive eras.

As the competition grew keener in the early seventies Byers, alone now that Dailey had left, put more money from some of his ancillary enterprises into the *News*. He installed a new steam press, a Taylor pattern, single-cylinder model, into the basement pressroom of the *News* Block to turn out the daily and weekly paper and for poster work. He put up a three-story and basement addition, 65 by 22 feet, at the rear of the block. When the addition was complete on November 1, 1873, he had going, in addition to the Taylor, several Hoe presses capable of printing a sheet 19 by 24 inches at a rate of 2700 impressions an hour. There were also job presses—Gordon jobbers.

Busy as he was with printing and publishing, Byers as usual was neck deep in other activities. As Colorado agent for the National Land Company, he had gone to New York to help get the Union Colony organized and then had sold it the present site of the abstemious city of Greeley. (Meeker's Unionists meant it when they said they wanted their town dry; the *News* reported on October 2, 1870, that a "committee" had burned down on the night of October 22 the first saloon which attempted to open its doors. Ralph Meeker, Nathan's son, was charged with rioting and a Mr. Norcross with arson, but *that* didn't get far in the arid climate.)

The colonization business was good. Once Byers had Greeley well established he journeyed to Chicago and sold fifty-five thousand acres to another group of men who moved west in March 1871 and founded the town of Longmont. The dynamic Byers thus was involved, directly or indirectly, in the establishment of at least five Colorado towns: Denver, Greeley, Longmont, Meeker, and Hot Sulphur Springs. And it was he who gave Central City its name.

A Board of Trade was organized as Denver sought to arrange financing for the Denver Pacific, and this became in 1884 the Denver Chamber of Commerce—with Byers as its president for 1900, his last public post. In 1871 the Board of Trade was busy organizing and promoting the many new businesses which had come to town on the railroad. But it

was decided that even more commercial ventures should be encouraged to make the trip, along with more settlers to buy their wares. A Board of Immigration was set up, and William N. Byers became its head. His correspondence with interested persons in the States was heavy, but one letter in particular cast a long shadow across his life.

It came from a Mrs. Hattie E. Sancomb of Lawrence, Kansas. Mrs. Sancomb was a milliner. She inquired respectfully about opportunities for her trade in the territory of Colorado. Byers made her the standard reply: excellent opportunities, the sky's the limit, watch Denver grow, everything's modern, and the horsecars will be in operation very soon. Come on out.

Mrs. Sancomb took the advice, stopped briefly in Denver to thank Mr. Byers for his many courtesies, then established residence in a little house at Golden City. She immediately acquired, it was alleged, a number of very loyal male friends. But the good-looking, nobly bearded Byers had caught her eye. She wrote him a note or two intimating that their brief acquaintance was too beautiful a thing not to last. Byers said later that her professions of desire for a closer friendship were "ardent." He had just entered the roaring forties of his life, an age when men sometimes make a last rebellion against time and yearn nostalgically for young goathood. Lib Byers had developed into something of a shrew and a scold, purse-mouthed, pretentiously pious, busy as a hen with her "club work." Moreover she was away much of the time on grand tours with social-climbing overtones to Cape Cod, Florida, Pasadena, and Europe. Byers was at minimum vulnerable; he wrote to Golden City that it would indeed be charming to have so handsome a young lady as a close friend.

The friendship ripened through 1872 and 1873, and then, on April 5, 1876, it burst into passionate flower. Hattie, it developed, had brought along from Lawrence not only her millinery needles but also a pearl-handled pistol. She hadn't learned to use it very well.

She shot once at close range and missed. She tried to shoot again, at even closer range, and was so weak from anger and nervous tension that she couldn't pull the trigger.

The whole affair took place in the street not over a block from Byers' home. Mrs. Byers was watching the encounter from behind the lace curtains of her parlor window. She got into her buggy, drove down, and rescued her errant husband.

A messenger was sent for Officer Sanders, who slapped Hattie in jail to reflect on the impropriety of shooting at a leading citizen.

The scandal had nothing but the highest-quality ingredients. A pioneer and civic dignitary, strictly top of the heap, respected, envied by many, probably maliciously and privately disliked by some for his prominence and many honors. A beautiful young woman, a divorcee (practically scandalous in itself), and the rumors were that she was "pretty fast." And then, on the other side, the wronged wife: pillar of the Methodist

Church, gentle, charming, a lady bountiful to the poor, leading club-woman, and . . . well, how could he! Poor, *poor* Libbie. Female friends beat a path to her side with covered dishes and comfort.

And to top it all the whole disgraceful affair had been acted out right there in the street, practically at Libbie's doorstep. Imagine!

Fellow editors in Denver, who constituted a rather considerable platoon at the time, forgot any lumps the *News* might have given them in the past and tried to suppress the story. It didn't work, of course. The whole town buzzed deliciously, and the story got better with each retelling. In one version Lib Byers had stood her ground and traded shots with the hussy home wrecker. It is just possible that some of Byers' male friends eyed him with new interest and revised estimates; he always had seemed so proper, fussy even.

Then, on April 15, George West—Byers' onetime employee and erstwhile friend—blew the lid off in his *Golden Transcript*. (West had also become a close friend of the lovely but erratic milliner.) The *Golden Globe* followed the *Transcript's* lead, and both began publishing Byers' letters to Hattie, as foolish as love letters nearly always are out of context. There had been a mutual return of correspondence during a split-up in 1874, but Hattie had prudently retained copies for her files. The *Globe* didn't rush into the scandal rashly. Word was sent to Byers that five hundred dollars, in cash, might cause the paper to pass over its journalistic responsibilities and forget about the scoop. Byers didn't reply.

Hattie had promised him the attack for more than a year. He had seen it coming, though probably he clung to hope right up to the moment the pearl-handled pistol cracked. Afterward he must have sagged some under the lash of his conscience and the weight of his dishonor; but then he took a deep breath, squared his shoulders, and opened his purse to pay the piper.

The *News* on April 1, was the first Denver paper to comment on its editor's descent into sin. Byers at no point denied his culpability; he only wanted to make it clear that if he had submitted to blackmail—five thousand dollars was the sum mentioned—he might have avoided becoming the public target of a young lady whose act of injured innocence was, after all, a trifle overdone. He could also have escaped trouble by acceding to her demands that he abandon home and family for her love nest, and, besides, he wasn't at all sure her heart was really broken. If it were true, she had been generous with the pitiful fragments to several other men whose names could be supplied if occasion warranted.

The *News* said it had become necessary to make the matter public in order to clear up the "distorted and false" statements of the *Golden Transcript*. Mrs. Sancomb, divorced in Lawrence on a charge of adultery with one Colonel Burns, had "for nearly a year past kept up a series of attacks and a round of persecution upon Mr. Byers. . . . The causes

were of her own seeking, and the various alleged provocations entirely pretended."

On the fifth instant she had sought to gain entrance to Byers' office and failed. She waited in the streets, and when he took the horsecar at 12:20 P.M. to go home for lunch she ran alongside and tried several times to jump on. The driver finally slowed the car, Hattie climbed aboard and flounced herself down on Byers' lap. "I pushed her one side to a seat." They got off together near his home, still arguing. At last she drew the pistol from her handbag. Byers pinioned her arms. Mrs. Byers saw the struggle from her window and flew to the corner in her buggy. Byers released his embrace and jumped in. As he did Hattie shot. The bullet passed behind the seat and nearly struck a child playing down the block. In her excitement Libbie Byers dropped the reins. The confused horse made a U-turn in the roadway and returned to give Hattie a second chance. But she couldn't pull the trigger.

She did, however, follow the buggy home. Frank Byers, the editor's son, armed himself and met her at the gate. Hattie waved her pistol under his nose but finally left. Officer Sanders picked her up three blocks away.

On April 16 the *News* devoted more than two columns of space to a select anthology of Hattie's threatening letters with the preface: "On reviewing the ground, the incidents and her many letters, it becomes very evident that Mrs. H. E. Sancomb became satisfied, about a year ago, that her game was safely trapped, and that she might proceed with her 'bear-baiting' in her own way, and at her own time, doubtless expecting the offer of a large amount of 'hush money.' . . ."

Hattie had written on June 3, 1875: "I have dedicated the rest of my life to your misery. . . . You are only dear to me as an object of revenge. . . . Send me a letter, I say, or I will one day pierce *her* heart with a dozen bullets. . . . Oh infernal villain, if I had you here I'd plant my fingers in your eyes and tear them from their sockets. . . ."

Another note complained: "During all these letters you have not so much as said you even cared the least for me. There has been no word of love and but few of sympathy. Then I *know* you hate me. . . . You have angered me through all our relations. You have paid me little attention, though knowing well that you were toying with a sensitive heart. . . ."

On July 3, 1875: ". . . You can do nothing now to save you or your family. . . . Ah, my friend, such letters as the one this morning will not do for me. A letter with kisses quiets me in a measure. Without them all is lost but my thirst for revenge. . . ."

On Jan. 15, 1876: ". . . I will take you on the street—anywhere. All I ask is a glimpse of you, and my bullet will be aimed. . . ."

Another January letter said: ". . . You had ought not to make

confession of anything to anyone. You have done no wrong. We have done nothing wrong. As I remember it now, I do not regard it as such a terrible affair. I have but made a hero of you, though I have yet to make a heroine of myself. . . . I fancy your gentlemen friends will envy you. . . . Yes, your own life will satisfy me after I have given *her* the heartache. . . . You show a wonderful love for wife and children by offering to give up your own life to save theirs. Such a love as you never had for me. . . . I asked you which you would rather lose your wife or myself, and you were brave enough and honest enough to make answer that you would rather lose me. . . .”

In March, Byers had received from one of Hattie’s more current admirers a note which informed him the distraught milliner had prepared “an auto-biography of Colorado experience, containing a minute account of the ‘ills of life that flesh is heir to’ . . . embellished with engravings of the principal characters, and the voluminous correspondence on both sides *verbatim*. . . .” Publication of the opus, it was suggested, might be suppressed by prompt action.

Byers made no effort in that direction, and events progressed to the sunny noonday of April 5.

Once the story was out Denver shook its head sadly over the weakness of mortal men, including civic dignitaries, but in general stood with Byers. The eloquent Professor Goldrick, in particular, loosed his vocabulary in scolding but defending his friend. The *Herald* was of the opinion that the sensational versions of the affair only showed the “*animus* of the *expose* against the editor and owner of the *News*, as an available piece of property for plucking, on the plea of ‘injured innocence,’ chaste-need ‘heart-aches,’ virgin virtues, tender throbbings, Kansas blue-grass, spring-chickens, and ‘sich.’” Goldrick continued:

Understand us now definitely. We don’t palliate the defendant, or defend the plaintiff, in this much mixed and melancholy case. We consider that Mr. Byers was a big fool to allow himself to become attached, intrigued or inveigled into any such entangling alliances with any divorced woman, when he knew that *she* knew he wasn’t a single man, but was, on the contrary, “just the oyster” for baiting or beating into blackmail or blacker misfortune. Nor do we desire to impugn or question the privilege of any editor to pile it on, for glory or gain, against Mr. Byers, if they so elect, on the plea of espousing the woman’s side, for “popularity’s” sake. “Free trade and sailors’ rights” is the right motto in matters of news, notions and ideas. Ours is the independent one, as we here give it, under all the circumstances of the scandalous case. And it is this: That the whole thing was a well laid plan, to play the Laura Fair, and “rule or ruin” one of the most prominent pioneer citizens of Colorado—whose services have been worth more to this Territory than a thousand little milliners, fresh from the courts of

"Bleeding Kansas." Aye, and a damaged article at that (as per Lawrence letter below,)

—"Whose tongue
Outvenoms all the worms of Nile"

(as per scores of her chaste "cusses" in letters below.)

. . . Then, we say treat them as they deserve. Fight the devils with fire. Prevent the killing of a good, useful man, even though it chagrined and showed up the schemes of every dangerous damsel or dame in Denver and Golden combined. "Them's our sentiments" on the subject, and we'll stick to them, for a friend who is otherwise worthy, while there's a toe to our boot or a type in our office. . . .¹⁵

The Lawrence letter Goldrick refers to was a communication from the town marshal of that city containing the information that Hattie's reputation there was not entirely a chaste one, that in fact she had been taken in adultery with the dashing Colonel Burns of Fort Leavenworth. The *Herald* also made up a bouquet of Hattie's letters to Byers. A couple of samples:

. . . Answer my question, or damn your soul I'll cut you into inch pieces. . . . Now your suffering has commenced. I want to see you, to rip your heart out. O, God have mercy. This is terrible. Am I in hell? Where am I? . . .

. . . You've made me hate you again with all the deadly hatred a woman can have for a man, and you have always lied like hell to me, expecting to "put me off." . . . Damn again and G-d damn you. I will kill you. . . . If you go to the Boulder parade I'll be likely to meet you at the Junction, and wouldn't it be fun to put a few bullets, four, just four, through your heart. When and where I can have the pleasure of killing you cold and lifeless in your regalia. For pleasure it will be to me G-d damn you, damn you, damn you, damn you. . . .

When Hattie appeared in court to answer for her gunplay one of the reporters offered a tone poem to her charms. She sat demurely in the harsh glare of the courtroom "with eyes of coal gray tint, regular features, dazzling teeth, penciled eyebrows, small poised head and wavy auburn hair. Her voice was soft and her manner caressing." The case was permitted to die on the docket without decision. No one seems to have recorded what later became of the gray-eyed milliner.

All of this in April, and the Republican party had summoned its stalwarts to assemble on June 14 to nominate candidates for the first offices of the newly created state of Colorado. Byers had been mentioned prominently as the ideal and logical candidate for governor.

¹⁵*Rocky Mountain Herald*, Apr. 15, 1876.

Congress on February 25, 1875, had passed an enabling act for the admission of the thirty-eighth state. A constitution had been drawn and approved. The goal for which Byers and his *News* had campaigned ceaselessly for so long now was reached.

The Republicans held their convention but, discreetly, there was no presentation of Byers' name. When Colorado voters trooped happily to the poles on October 3, 1876, first-class citizens of the United States at last, they elected a Republican, John L. Routt, to be the state's first governor.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

Byers Bows Out

SO OPEN and lush a scandal as the case of the popular milliner might have wrecked the life of a lesser man. The fall was from the heights, and the descent abrupt. William N. Byers paid bitterly for his sinning, but he faced up to it in as public a penance as might have been contrived by the most saber-toothed moralist. And he lived it down. Probably he never carried his head quite so high again on the bustling streets of growing Denver, but he was undefeated. At the end he had won back the respect of the town which he, more than any other single man, created.

Byers had been one of the founders of the Republican party in Colorado. His career as a political power ceased with finality. He never permitted his name to be mentioned again for high public office, and he did not seek to resume his place in the inner circles of his party. It is apparent that he felt his shame closed the book firmly on that chapter of his life. Although he still moved in the select group of men who controlled Colorado politics, there is no indication that he made any effort to make his voice heard except through the impersonal columns of his *News*. And that chapter of his life soon was to end too.

There is some evidence that the scandal brought Byers business reverses, principally in his many side-line enterprises, though at a distance of many years it is difficult to say whether these came because he had been placed in Coventry or arose out of his own largehearted, soft-headed way with the business world. When he was flush Byers was always good for a touch, a grubstake, a contribution. He would go any friend's bond, Lib Byers complained. He invested enthusiastically in many schemes only to discover later that they were retroactively assessable. He was never out of debt, and nineteenth-century interest rates were merciless.

The daily record of receipts and expenditures in his pocket diaries is fascinatingly meticulous. Entries carefully note a nickel given to a beggar boy, a dollar-and-a-half hat for an Indian friend, twenty-five cents in the collection plate at church, ten cents spent for grapes or forty cents for beer. But they give only a confused picture of Byers' volatile business affairs. He is maintaining an account with Brooks Brothers on Broadway

in New York and at the same time paying a fee in bankruptcy. He loans four hundred dollars to a friend, and pays nine hundred dollars interest on an overdue note. He juggles one note against another, and meantime is investing in half a dozen mining, real estate, commercial, and railroad ventures. Through all the ups and downs, however, tidy sums of money passed through his hands, sums which loom larger when considered in relation to the scarce dollar of his place and time. At the close of his diary for 1866 he entered a record of how things went in 1864, a year of Indian war, isolation, and depressed conditions in Denver. He shows income of \$33,933.59 and expenses of \$24,116.98, for a "nett" of \$9,876.61. It is not indicated whether this is a personal accounting or includes the operations of the *News*, for which no early financial records exist. On an adjoining page in the 1866 journal there is an account for 1865 which shows income of \$4932.52, with no entries of receipts from the *News*, and expenditures of \$13,898.87.

Running deep in the red or riding high as a man of means, Byers by 1876 had brought his territory of Jefferson to statehood, his town up from border ruffianism, and his little newspaper to a position of respect and dominance. Gold and silver mines were pouring wealth through Denver's funnel. Each train arriving on the new tracks brought more settlers, and the tourists and sight-seers were beginning to arrive in the golden stream which ever since has been a major renewable resource to the Mile-High City. The town called the *News* "Old Reliable" and studied its pronouncements on all matters foreign and domestic. The other newspapers lambasted the *News* with an intensity and consistency which attest to its position of strength, or they deferred to it as to an unchallengeable leader. It must have seemed to Byers that all his labors were being crowned, all his bright visions for the new land fulfilled. Then Hattie Sancomb made the trip in from Golden with her pistol.

The advertising columns of the *News* through 1876 and 1877 indicate no substantial loss of patronage, but it is possible the blow was felt in the job department, and commercial printing often has been the margin of solvency for a small-city newspaper. In May 1876, Byers was forced to borrow twelve thousand dollars on the *News* Block site and building and his ranch up the river. The newspaper was reorganized as the Rocky Mountain News Printing Company later that year. Initially Byers held all the stock in the firm, but gradually he took in other investors. An enterprise which had always been a highly personal one moved toward corporate anonymity, and Byers must have suffered further loss of heart as he watched this final penalty being levied. Toward the end of the unhappy year prospects apparently improved. The scandal was simmering down and it became possible for Byers to get away from it all without giving the appearance of fleeing public scorn. He left Denver in February for a two-month vacation in Florida. He camped, loafed, fished, and

shot an eight-foot ten-inch alligator. The beginnings of the citrus-fruit industry were observed with interest, and the jottings in his diary indicate he toyed with the idea of throwing it all over in Denver and making a fresh start raising oranges. But he didn't, and he came home in April. Shortly thereafter it was announced that associates in the News Printing Company now included Kemp G. Cooper, W. B. Vickers, and Byers' future son-in-law, William F. Robinson.¹

During 1877 the *News* led a campaign for smallpox vaccination when an epidemic threatened the city, and it reached eastward across the continent to vent its ire on New York sweatshop operators who were oppressing the "sewing girls." Byers plunged into new business and mining ventures, began collecting native gem stones on his mountain rambles and sending them off to lapidaries for polishing. He experimented with a trout bait consisting of beef soaked in whiskey and port wine. At the end of the year his diary carries a brief note which is the only recognition he gave to his journal that he had been through the fires of scandal:

D. McC knew H. S. as Hattie Russell at Lawrence in 1868—Character bad. Lived alone—Usher, Ballene, Barkalow & Mc next knew her in Denver in 1870 as Mrs. Chichester. She took in Rube Chichester & pretended to have married him.

On May 4, 1878, the pioneer editor of the Rockies withdrew from his *Rocky Mountain News*. Possibly the financial condition of the company made it impossible or inadvisable for him to continue. Perhaps he was weary of carrying a public load, though he was only forty-seven. Certainly he wanted to spend more time in his beloved mountains. His plans for Hot Sulphur Springs were growing taller and wider in direct proportion to his restored spirits.

At any rate the paper announced on May 5 that there had been a meeting of the stockholders on the previous day. Byers was out. The "trustees elected to manage the company for the ensuing year" were K. G. Cooper, W. B. Vickers, W. F. Robinson, L. B. France, and Gus Alden. Cooper was chosen president, Vickers vice-president, and Robinson secretary-treasurer. Cooper was an aggressive young businessman who was moving into new prominence in the affairs of the city. France was Byers' personal attorney and real estate associate; he had seen the retiring editor through the Sancomb affair. Vickers, later one of Denver's historians, was the journalist in the firm.

In the same issue Byers sang his swan song as a newspaper publisher. He had started his career as an editor with "hat in hand," and he ended it with equal humility:

¹*Rocky Mountain News*, May 16, 1877.

GOOD BYE

With this issue my pecuniary interest in and editorial control of The Rocky Mountain News ceases. The News Printing Company continues with but a single change in its directory, and will conduct the publication of the News, as well as all the varied branches of the business that have grown up with and around it. I apprehend there will be no material change in its course, but of its plans the new management will probably speak in its next issue. This assurance, however, I can give: that it is backed by plenty of capital to keep it at the front. Friends who have feared its failure may dismiss their alarm. Enemies who have hoped for its downfall may possess their souls in peace. It will continue as it always has been in Colorado—"a power in the land."

It is impossible after more than nineteen years of daily repeated tasks; of constant solicitude and anxiety, how best to perform a great duty to the public; of intimate association with all the newspapers that have ever risen, lived and died, or that yet live, in Colorado; of personal acquaintance with so many—it seems to me with all—of the people of the state, to lay down the editorial pen without sad and strange emotions. These years have compassed a larger part of my life than can be given to any other undertaking, and they were of what should be its best for work. Undertaken by accident, the newspaper business has had for me a strange fascination. Not educated as a journalist, I have not been confined to the straight and narrow path of the profession. My feelings have been those of personal championship for a state in which I have felt a deep personal interest; of neighborly feeling for every person who has become a citizen of the state. I know that my work has been roughly done and that I have made many mistakes. If I have seemed too earnest it was not with malice, and I crave the pardon of each and every one whom I may have unintentionally offended. Toward my brethren of the press I have none but the kindest feelings. All differences are forgotten and only pleasant recollections of them shall dwell in my memory.

Wm. N. Byers

The news of Byers' retirement was made public on Sunday. No Monday edition was being published at this time. The next issue of the paper, on Tuesday, May 7, 1878, carried the declaration of the new management:

A NEW DEPARTURE

In assuming entire instead of partial control of the columns and business of the News, the new managers will make no parade of their purposes beyond a few simple announcements. First, there will be no change in the politics of the paper. Secondly, we have bought the good will alone and not the quarrels of the News. We do not enter at all into the question whether the News has been right or wrong in regard to its

differences, and above all we do not wish to reflect upon Mr. Byers, from whom we part company with unfeigned regret. But we do say that wrangling is an unprofitable business for a newspaper, and henceforth it will be eschewed as much as possible by us, though in making this statement we do not wish to be understood as resigning the right to repel attacks upon ourselves or on our paper. Finally, the News modestly aspires to be a paper for the whole state, and not for the north or south or for Denver alone. Our ambition is to overcome every prejudice against the paper in every portion of Colorado, and to increase its widespread popularity by a liberal, straight forward, consistent course in politics and in business. We have no friends to reward nor enemies to punish. We neither seek nor expect anything for ourselves in the way of political preferment. The News stands to-day "free and untrameled for the public good," backed by sufficient capital to make it entirely independent and ready to follow the dictates of its own conscience in regard to public affairs. We intend to print a newspaper second to none in the state of Colorado, and will try to please as many of our subscribers as possible. We will extend the utmost editorial and business courtesy to everybody, and trust that our feelings of friendly interest in all the people and towns and mining camps of the state will be reciprocated elsewhere, and that the News will always be considered the people's paper—the personal organ of every citizen who has the good of the state at heart.

Byers' brothers of the press gave him a good sendoff, and he remained for the rest of his life an emeritus member of the Denver newspaper fraternity. He continued to be active in the Colorado Press Association and was retained in the councils of the Press Club. His rival editors forgot the many bitter quarrels and the acid words that had been exchanged on matters which were as often picayune as momentous. Nearly every newspaper in the state took note of Byers' departure, all of them with words of praise. The tribute of the Denver *Tribune* was typical:

The News of Sunday morning contained the valedictory of its founder and builder, William N. Byers. Mr. Byers established the Rocky Mountain News nineteen years ago, in the very beginning of the history of Colorado. He has given to that paper the best years of his life, and the result of his work may well be to him just cause of pride and self-congratulation. The News has ever been, alike in its origin, its traditions, its associations, its characteristics and its daily work and accomplishments, a part of Colorado. Its growth has marked and reflected the growth of the great country whose advancement it has promoted. The paper has been, in a peculiar and preeminent sense, William N. Byers, and he has been in the same sense the paper. It has reflected and embodied his pluck and energy and will and faith, and has been the instrumentality for the exercise of those qualities. And who can deny that the sum of the results of their exercise has been greatly for the good of Colorado. The influence of the News in giving direction to

the energies of the young, vigorous and grasping commonwealth at the foot of the Rocky Mountains, and in giving form and character to the new civilization, cannot be over-rated. And that influence none can deny was Mr. Byers. In this early and great work of direction and formation and right starting the News has no rival. And only feelings of regret will be experienced at the retirement from the active work of journalism of the man who did that work so well—a work that was necessarily, in some respects, a rough work. Our contemporary will, however, be continued by able hands. Mr. Cooper is a fine businessman, and Mr. Vickers an experienced and capable journalist.²

Byers retained ownership of his mortgaged News Block and rented it to the printing company. Occasionally, in the years ahead, he would write accounts of his mountain rambles and experiences for the paper, but his days as a newspaperman were over.

He returned briefly during the summer and autumn of 1878 to his original trade. A survey was made for a road near 8369-foot Grand Lake, which today claims the world's highest yacht club, and then he lugged his transit and chains over Gore Pass into Egeria Park and ran lines down the Yampa River as far north as present Steamboat Springs. Early the following year he was up at the new boom town of Leadville, looking for likely mining properties in the two-mile-high silver camp. It is probable that some of his highly placed friends used their influence in Washington and, in March 1879, Byers accepted his second appointment as postmaster of Denver. He took over the post office on April 12, and held the \$250-a-month position to April 14, 1883. During this period he inaugurated Denver's first carrier delivery of mail with six men.

Meantime he was branching out into real estate and other fields. He developed two subdivisions and saw them added to the city of Denver, and he held downtown property and lots in several other areas of town. Nor were his landholdings confined to Denver. At one point he was paying taxes in eleven counties of the state, still owned lots in Omaha and inherited farm land in Iowa. The real estate operations apparently provided the sizable sums which were dissipated in a variety of other undertakings.

In an era when the Colorado mines were producing many silver kings and Midases, Byers missed his lucky strike, although he was on the scene early in each new camp, was the intimate associate of many of the men who did hit, and was deep in the speculations. He made several trips to New York during the mine boom times, and he wrote home on February 27, 1880, that Eastern investors "take mines like trout take flies." Some of his virtually fruitless mining ventures included the Iron Mask, Great Mammoth Lode, and Phil Sheridan No. 2 mines and the

²Reprinted in the *Rocky Mountain News*, May 8, 1878.

Swan River Mining Company. He was heavily in the game in Boulder, Gilpin, Clear Creek, Pitkin, Lake, and Summit counties, and at Twin Lakes south of Leadville he at one time held extensive mining, water, and property rights in an area now receiving extensive preliminary development for the rare alloy metal molybdenum. Like the rest of the mining men of his day, Byers was after gold and silver, but he never found them.

Few of his early contemporaries took much interest in water, even though they saw the city of Denver growing and knew that the prairie sweeping up to the foot of the Rockies was thirsty land subject to vicious drouth. Byers, with some foresight, was an exception. As early as the late 1870s he was looking ahead and exploring for water rights, now more precious than most of the mines ever discovered in Colorado. In the summer of 1880 he secretly incorporated with his attorney, L. B. France, and the future silver king, H. A. W. Tabor, as the Denver Water Supply Company. He had made reconnaissance on foot and horseback to the summit of Mount Rosalie, and the company laid claim to a lake at the head of Bear Creek which Byers was convinced would meet demands "until Denver grows to 500,000 people."

Up in his Middle Park in 1883 he opened a sawmill near the town of Hot Sulphur Springs, which he had platted, and operated it at a profit for several years while the town was building. His dreams of a fashionable spa never got beyond an income of a few hundred dollars a week from fees for healing baths, but in 1899 the Byers family—which owned the hot springs property jointly—received sixty thousand dollars for the undeveloped fountains of health. Byers had wanted to hold out for more, which exasperated his business-wise wife. He was, as usual, heavily in debt, and Lib Byers wrote to her son:

. . . Frank I want to say *one* thing and I say it with all the force I am worth. You must give up your idea that your father is to have all he put in there. Such a thing is most unjust and is not to be thought of and I will *never* sign the deeds if that is to be the outcome. He is not entitled to it. He has squandered more money in the loss of *other* property than he ever put in the Springs and I—me—had our interest in that property. Has he ever thought of making that good to us? *Never*. And would anyone else give him the lions share after he had given up all claims to it through his own mismanagement. No Sir. We will do what is right and just but he shall not claim and certainly does not expect to have more than anyone else. *Yours* is much the larger part and I intend to see that you have it. . . . If he had every dollar the Springs would bring he would be signing somebody's *Bond*. He would soon bankrupt us all if we could furnish him with all the money he wanted. I want him to be comfortable *all* his days but he will not be if he has the handling of means. He has never been out of debt since

I have known him, and you *know* there has been no excuse for it. It is 45 years tomorrow since I started out on lifes long journey and *I* know what I am talking about. . . .³

Frank Byers lived and ranched at Hot Sulphur Springs for many years and served as a sort of resident manager for the family's Middle Park properties.

A few days later Mrs. Byers wrote Frank she was "in favor of selling the Springs for anything like their value. We can't hope to get what Father *thinks* they are *worth*. So we will not consider that at all. You know he would rather loose a property by mortgage than sell it any time."

As Denver shot up from a frontier settlement to a modern small city through the seventies and eighties street railways became a necessity and a profitable business. In 1870 the population had been 4759 persons. A sixfold growth occurred by 1880 to put the census at 36,629, and by 1890 there were 106,713 persons who needed a means of getting around town more conveniently than by foot, horseback, or buggy. Horsecars began trundling through the streets in 1871 and served the city's traction needs for nearly fifteen years. But in the mid-eighties science was advancing into new fields. Byers and his friend John Evans, as pillars of the University of Denver, were in a particularly favorable position to learn of the developments.

On their faculty was a physics professor named Sidney H. Short. Professor Short, watching experiments in his field then under way in the East and in England and Germany, became convinced he could make a streetcar go by means of electric power. He built a little four-hundred-foot circle of track on the university's grounds and proved his case by taking curiosity-seekers for rides on a car which drew its power from runners following a mid-track slot containing a charged cable.

Byers, Evans, and others were convinced they glimpsed the future in Professor Short's invention. They incorporated in 1885 the Denver Electric and Cable Railway Company, converted the following year into the Denver Tramway Company, the firm which still operates Denver's mass transit system. Tracks and underground power conduits were laid, and in the winter of 1885-86 one of the first electric street railway systems in America began operating through Denver streets. The United States Electric Company, with Byers as its president, was organized to exploit the system in other cities.

Unfortunately Professor Short's invention didn't work too well. Pedestrians complained that they suffered a severe shock if they happened to make simultaneous contact with the mid-track slotway and one of the rails in crossing the street. Horses, particularly, objected. Their rearings

³Elizabeth Byers to Frank Byers, Nov. 5, 1899, Byers papers, Western History Collection, Denver Public Library.

and boltings as they felt the shock created a major traffic hazard in the increasingly busy streets. The Short system was abandoned in 1887, and the Tramway Company went back to four-legged power.

Underground cable traction meantime had been perfected in other cities, and the system was installed in Denver in 1888, though late in 1889 the first overhead trolley electric cars began experimental operations. Byers was a Tramway director from the beginning, and later he became the operating vice-president. He kept a close eye on the lines, noting down in his pocket diary the number of passengers carried and reminding himself that reprimands were called for when he saw a motorman let a patron escape fare payment.

But even running a streetcar system on such a highly personal basis failed to keep Byers fully occupied. His abundant energies were poured into a bewildering variety of other concurrent activities. He was "in" intercity railroads too. His part as one of the organizers of the Denver Pacific already has been mentioned. As the railroad era progressed he also became involved in Evans' Denver, South Park & Pacific, the Denver & Rio Grande, the Utah & Pacific, and the Mexican National railroads. In 1896 he was Colorado chairman for the Deep Water Utilization Committee, a device established to win traffic for lines to Gulf coast ports in Texas and thereby apply pressure on the Union Pacific monopoly for freight rate reductions.

All along the way Byers continued to dabble in mining and agriculture and also found time to become a pioneer oil-well investor, rear and breed a Kentucky thoroughbred, and promote a fish hatchery for Grand County. He even had a nasty little brush with banking in the depths of the panic of 1893.

Byers emerged from the Union National Bank with his wings neatly clipped. He went into the financial adventure with his friend and former colleague, "General" Roger W. Woodbury, Civil War hero, onetime compositor, and later owner-editor of the *Denver Times*.⁴ Woodbury became president of the bank and Byers a vice-president. But the institution was carried under in the panic which shook silver-rich Colorado when the Sherman Silver Purchase Act was repealed by President Cleveland. The Union Bank closed its doors on July 18, 1893, reopened August 21, and finally went under July 29, 1895. Byers had invested ten thousand dollars and then dug down for a matching sum as he and the other directors sought to save their institution. Endorsements on his stock certificates, preserved among his papers in the Denver Public Library, show that when the receiver finished sorting through the debris Byers salvaged five hundred dollars of his twenty thousand.

His financial relationships with friend Woodbury seem to have been star-crossed. Concurrently with the bank failure Byers lost \$9308.20 in

⁴Woodbury scrapbook, collection of the author.

going the bond of Woodbury for a Nevada Southern Railroad deal with the Newport Wharf & Lumber Company of Los Angeles in June 1895. This was one of the experiences which led Libbie Byers to complain of her husband's incautious way with a signature. Mrs. Byers wrote to her daughter: "Of course you know we have been lifted high and dry by the old Union Bank—If I can just prevent your old dad from signing any more Bonds, I guess we are safe."⁵

Byers' last connection with the *Rocky Mountain News* was severed on October 1, 1888, when he sold the News Block on Larimer Street, which he had been renting to the publishing company for ten years. Meantime, during 1888, he had constructed the Byers Building, a two-story structure uptown at Fifteenth and Champa streets. This was a flier in investment for rentals and had a number of offices over several small ground-floor stores. The building apparently returned Byers a modest income for ten years or more, and he clung to it with characteristic doggedness long after its site became far more valuable as downtown real estate than as a rental property, a shift in values which did not escape the attention of his wife.

"I wrote Pa last week," Mrs. Byers said in an April 5, 1898, letter to Frank, "just begging him to sell his Block, as that is the only property big enough to get him out of debt. I suppose he will be very angry, as he *cannot* or *will* not *see* that he is sinking deeper and deeper every day, or that \$100,000 or even \$75,000 today would be worth twice that later on. As things are *now* I don't see the slightest chance for him to save anything. Oh *why* will he be so stubborn. I believe he hopes that I will encumber all I have to save him from going to the wall. But I *cannot* do it. I have already loaded myself down to help him (and no thanks either). I am awfully sorry."

The matter came up again in another letter to Frank on March 27, 1899: "An eastern man wanted to buy your father's block but the Pater scared him off by asking \$150,000. Then of course he got *mad* when I said that was entirely too high. . . . Frank it is no use—I don't think it ever enters his head that he is getting old, that but ten or twelve years is probably the extent of his life. . . ."

Despite the debts and the note-juggling they required, Byers and his family were leading a good life. There was money enough for frequent trips to New York, Florida, California, and back to visit the scenes of Byers' early surveying in Oregon. There was a Caribbean cruise and a tour to Europe. In 1891 they moved into a large and lavishly appointed new home at 171 South Washington Street. It was named Kenneth Square, apparently after Bayard Taylor's home town in Pennsylvania. The location was part of one of Byers' subdivisions, and the mansion sprawled over a full square block of grounds which he planted to gardens

⁵Elizabeth Byers to Mary E. Robinson, Aug. 4, 1895, Byers papers, Denver Public Library.

and landscaped with an arboretum of imported trees and shrubs. The interior of the house was fitted out in mahogany, oak, and walnut, and soft ivory damask covered some of the walls.

The Denver School Board acquired the north half of the Kenneth Square block in 1904 and leased the Byers mansion in 1918 or 1919 for use as Logan Junior High School. Later in 1919 the entire property was purchased for forty-five thousand dollars, and in 1920-21 Byers Junior High School was built. For a time the old mansion was occupied as an annex to the new school, but eventually it was torn down.⁶ The junior high school is the second Denver school to be named for the *News'* founder. The present Alameda Elementary School had been called Byers until the junior high was completed, when the name was shifted by the school board.⁷ Damask from the walls of the old Byers home was taken down, laundered and dyed, and cut into costumes to add splendor to school dramatics, and some of the mahogany woodwork and mirrors from the house are still preserved in the school. The tombstone of one of Byers' dogs remains in place on the school grounds, along with part of the ornate iron fence which once surrounded Kenneth Square. A few of the exotic trees the nature-loving Byers planted continue to cast shade on the junior high school lawns.

The dignity of his big house on its hill and the green beauty of the grounds must have been sources of comfort to Byers as he struggled with his debts and many responsibilities in the declining years of his life. A hint of the expansive but nip-and-tuck struggle he waged with fortune shows in an annual accounting at the end of his 1901 diary. The notation specifies receipts totaling \$51,324.62, but expenses of \$50,186.10.

To the year of his death, however, Byers remained active and prominent in city life and gave generously of his time to a wide assortment of community projects. He served three terms—1893, 1894, and 1900—as president of the Denver Chamber of Commerce. In 1884 he was the founder and first president of the Colorado State Forestry Association. He had been a founding member of the Colorado Pioneer Society, was its president and its secretary. For six years he also was president of the Colorado State Historical Society. He was a founder and longtime director of the Colorado Humane Society. He stood high in the Masonic fraternity, serving as the head of two Denver orders and as "grand high priest" for the state.

When Denver sought to inaugurate an annual civic carnival on the pattern of New Orleans' Mardi Gras, Byers was called upon. For four years he was president and guiding spirit of the Festival of Mountain

⁶Alice L. Moore, *Early History of Byers Junior High School, 1919-1940*, typescript, Department of Information Services, Denver Public Schools.

⁷Minutes, Denver Board of Education, Feb. 11, 1920, and Sept. 14, 1921.

and Plain, staged annually from 1895 through 1899 and revived in 1901 and 1912. The festival was a three-day celebration involving elaborate parades, outdoor balls, fireworks, exhibits, trolley-car serenading, fire-truck runs, rock-drilling contests, and what may have been the West's first public rodeo of "world champion rough-riders." Elite of the festival were the "Slaves of the Silver Serpent," and a blocks-long reptile was the feature of the illuminated night parade.⁸

Early in the 1890s, Byers began conserving his energies with long weekends of rest at the mountain cabin he built at Ferndale in Platte Cañon, but in general his health remained good and he was still vigorous enough to climb mountains. His wife wrote Mollie at the end of 1901 that "of course we all see changes in your father but nothing alarming yet. I should not be surprised if he were to have the same troubles as Gov. Evans had. Either that or he may go very suddenly someday. However, I think he is safe for many months yet. I notice these sudden deaths that seem so common these days affect him deeply but in his case I fear softening of the brain most of all. Indeed, I can see symptoms of it now."⁹ Later, a month before Byers' death, she voiced from Pasadena her opinion that "surely father must be dissipating."¹⁰

Byers' diaries show that toward the end of his life he was taking a nip now and then of Swamp Root, Red Raven Spirits, and Duffy's malt whiskey to keep the chill from his bones. The last entry in his pocket journal, December 31, 1902, is: "Bottle whiskey 1.75." The diaries indicate that he was in failing health during his last year, and the alcoholic tonics probably were taken with medicinal intent rather than in abandonment of lifelong habits of moderation. He was also consuming quantities of Carlsbad, Honyadi, and Piperazine waters, and during the latter part of 1902 he received almost daily medical treatments for unindicated ailments.

At last death came to Byers in his bed at Kenneth Square on March 25, 1903, at the age of seventy-two. It was the end of a long, active, and useful life. There was almost nothing in the affairs of his city which he had not influenced in some way at some time.

The city, in its turn, mourned its pioneer. Byers was buried in Fairmount Cemetery following a funeral attended by all the leading citizens, nearly every one of them a personal friend. The honorary pallbearers were the faithful John L. Dailey; D. H. Moffat, Jr., the railroad and banking millionaire; Rodney Curtis, president of the Denver Tramway Company; Andrew Sagendorf, pioneer of '59; Lewis B. France, Byers'

⁸Levette J. Davidson, "The Festival of Mountain and Plain," *Colorado Magazine*, Vol. XXV, Nos. 4 and 5 (July, Sept. 1948), pp. 145ff. and 203ff.

⁹Elizabeth Byers to Mary E. Robinson, Dec. 3, 1901, Byers papers, Denver Public Library.

¹⁰Elizabeth Byers to Frank Byers, Feb. 6, 1903, Byers papers, Denver Public Library.

attorney and long-time business associate; Alfred Butters, L. C. Ellsworth, and E. T. Wells. Active pallbearers were the son of Governor Evans, William G. Evans, Charles H. Reynolds, Charles Kibler, John J. Berkey, A. D. Wilson, Arthur Williams, C. C. Gird, and Aaron Gove, later to become a famous American educator.¹¹

The obituaries in the newspapers were flowery and lengthy, and many of the organizations to which Byers had given his abundant energies worked up memorial volumes for presentation to the family. Some of them are hand-bound with burnt or tooled leather covers. They are illustrated, illuminated, and soar into calligraphic flourishes. The homage was elaborate, in the fashion of the day, and probably sincere.

All the proper things were said, the words of tribute and veneration which take so much from a man by making him more than mortal. The hand-lettered, water-colored memorial of the Chamber of Commerce saluted its former president as builder and pioneer and spoke of his "unselfish devotion to public interest." Byers was, the Chamber said, "Denver's most loyal and best beloved citizen." He was "faithful, sincere," with "dignity, courtesy, modesty, affability," the State Historical and Natural History Society of Colorado said. Denver Lodge No. 5, AF & AM, called him a "leader, builder and force for the right." His "massive character" was noted in a letter of condolence from a leading law firm, which described him as "a great man," a "man in every fiber of his being," whose "fortitude, foresight and unwavering faith, underly the foundation of things in this state as granite underlies our hills." Byers was "the recognized chief architect" of a "great and prosperous Commonwealth," the Society of Colorado Pioneers said. He had "high ideals and aspirations" and "honesty, constructive genius, unswerving determination."¹²

The local historians have been equally respectful. Wilbur Fisk Stone says: "Not seeking honor, honors were yet multiplied unto him because of his recognized ability and his devotion to the general good. His name and record have been indelibly impressed upon the history of Colorado, for he was one of those who aided in laying broad and deep the foundation upon which the present progress and prosperity, the political, legal and moral status of the state have been builded." Joseph G. Brown wrote for the biographical section of *Byers History of Colorado*: "Among the men of distinguished and unusual note in Colorado, there is none whose name will be longer treasured in history than that of William N. Byers. There is none whose works for public benefit will be longer remembered with gratitude by a people. So closely has his private life and public service been identified with the progress of the State that they become an essential part of its history."

¹¹*Rocky Mountain News*, Mar. 27, 1903.

¹²The memorials are preserved among the Byers papers in the Denver Public Library.

Jerome Smiley, Denver's most meticulous and voluminous historian, found that very little he wrote about in his thousand-page chronicle of the city did not in some way involve Byers: "As will have been seen by the reader, his name is encountered almost everywhere in the Story of Denver, in the preparation of which it became to the writer a matter of much personal interest to ascertain whether anything of commanding importance in the city's history had been consummated without Mr. Byers' personal participation. The reader who follows the Story to its close will not need to be told that the exceptions to the rule are very few, and that even in most of the exceptions the indirect influence of this eminent figure in the annals of Denver is apparent. . . . He has seen the majestic panorama of civilization unroll from the Mississippi River to the Pacific Ocean over the plains and mountains he traversed as a pioneer in the vast domain; and it would seem, than he, no man bore a nobler, more unselfishly useful, part in preparing the way for it."¹³

All of the kind and praising words of obituaries, memorials, and history books, or most of them, speak in true approximations of Byers. But they create an austere image; they do not give back a living man. No one remembered, in public, that he had once erred with a beautiful woman. Or that he had lived to pay for and then to triumph over his error. No one mentioned that his sometimes imperious wife, despite her carping, remained by his side while the forked tongue of scandal darted. Probably only Libbie Byers remembered that in his age he became so attached to a calf he named Trilby that his heart would have broken if she had been sold. "He is a queer old chap," she wrote with affection. Little note was taken of his deep love for the mountains and high, far places, or that on his hikes he stuffed bits of rock, pine cones, and samples of mosses into his pockets. No point was made of his affection for the theater or of the voluminous reading by which he educated himself. It would have occurred to no one at the turn of the century to mention, as part of the man, that he had a sweet tooth and was more likely to indulge himself on rock candy than on whiskey. Or that another of his private passions was fresh fruit. Only readers of the sketchy, routine, and generally uninformative jottings in his diaries know that Byers faithfully recorded each year the first bluebird and crocuses, noted the wild birds singing and the greenup. Aspirations and spring always were closer to his being than autumn and harvests.

Somehow, though he sowed with a generous hand and in many seasons, the great reapings which came to many of his associates never

¹³No full-length biography exists, but there are numerous biographical sketches. See Smiley, *History of Denver*, pp. 654-56; Wilbur Fisk Stone, *op. cit.*, Vol. III, pp. 499-503; James H. Baker and LeRoy R. Hafen, *History of Colorado* (Denver, 1927), Vol. V, pp. 571-73; Frank Hall, *op. cit.*, Vol. III, pp. 136-37, and Vol. IV, pp. 368-69; Will C. Ferril, *Sketches of Colorado* (Denver, 1911), Vol. I, pp. 368-69; Byers "History of Colorado," in *Encyclopedia of Biography of Colorado*, pp. 187-90; and *Portrait and Biographical Record of Denver and Vicinity*, pp. 145-47.

came to him. His will was filed for probate in the county court of Judge Ben B. Lindsey, who later would found in Denver the nation's first juvenile court. Everything went to Elizabeth, Mollie, and Frank. The executors—widow, son, and son-in-law, William F. Robinson—reported on April 25, 1903, that the estate could be closed. They had received and disbursed \$7286.46.

Elizabeth Byers survived her husband until January 6, 1920, when she died of pneumonia in California. Four children had been born to them, but only two came through the harsh treatment the frontier gave to infants. Charles Fred and James Byers both died before they were two. Frank Sumner Byers lived until November 4, 1937, and his sister, Mary Elizabeth (Mollie) Byers Robinson, died December 28, 1940.

When the Board of Managers of the Colorado State Capitol decided to create a "Hall of Fame" to the memory of builders and founders, the editor of the *News* was one of their first selections. The gallery consists of sixteen stained-glass portraits occupying circular windows high in the bell-shaped dome of the Capitol. The faces of fifteen men and one woman, wreathed in imperishable columbines, look down from their heights into the statehouse rotunda. With Byers in the group are William Gilpin, John Evans, Bela M. Hughes, Nathaniel P. Hill, Alexander Majors, Christopher (Kit) Carson, John L. Dyer, Chief Ouray, Jim Baker, J. W. Denver, William J. Palmer, Mrs. Frances Wisebart Jacobs, Casimiro Barela, R. G. Buckingham, and Benjamin H. Eaton.¹⁴

¹⁴Levette J. Davidson, "Colorado's Hall of Fame," *Colorado Magazine*, Vol. XXVII, No. 1 (Jan. 1950), pp. 23ff.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

A Democrat Buys the News

THE regime of Kemp Cooper and associates which took over the *News* when Byers bowed out in May 1878 didn't last long. Its interregnum was so short, in fact, that one is led to suspect a setup. Possibly one of the motives in establishing the printing company was to spare Byers further political embarrassment. As a loyal Republican he would have suffered much additional loss of face had he been a party to what happened to his newspaper two months after his retirement.

On July 16 the paper was sold to a Democrat.

William Austin Hamilton Loveland wore his whiskers mutton-chop style, and he not only was the state's leading Democrat but in other matters, too, he was the veritable antithesis of nearly everything the *News* had stood for. He was, moreover, one of the few men in America who ever bested Jay Gould in a railroad manipulation. Loveland beat the master at his own game with a maneuver which was Western and direct: a train was stopped and a federal judge kidnaped at gunpoint by masked men.

Loveland laid down thirty thousand dollars for the *News* and its facilities, exclusive of the News Block. He became president of the Rocky Mountain News Printing Company, which was reorganized on the basis of 400 shares of ownership at forty thousand dollars capitalization. James T. Smith was elected vice-president, and W. F. Robinson carried over temporarily as secretary-treasurer. Loveland held 396 shares of the stock, and one share went to Smith, Robinson, Gus Alden, and James F. Wellborn, who replaced France as the company attorney. Smith was made editor with M. J. Gavisk as city editor. William Vickers left to take over editorship of the *Tribune*, which now became the city's principal Republican organ. W. R. Thomas also departed the *News* staff to return later after serving for a spell as editorial writer for Woodbury's *Times*.

In announcing the new ownership on July 17, the *News* said that politico-economic pressures forced the change. There were two strong Republican papers in town—the *News* and the *Tribune*—and “the republican party of Colorado cannot support two.” The previous proprietors had “preferred a profitable sale to the possibility of losing money by continuing the publication of the paper.” All of this may have been merely a dig at the Republicans, since the *News* had been that party's

chief spokesman, but at any rate "Old Reliable" henceforth would be reliable from a Democratic point of view.

Loveland declared himself in the same issue:

TO THE PUBLIC.

With this issue of *The News* the undersigned assumes the varied responsibilities of proprietor—responsibilities that concern himself, the democratic party and the public at large, and which, as soon as the necessary details can be arranged, he hopes to share with citizens of the state, located permanently here and permanently identified with the growth and prosperity of the commonwealth.

Speaking of the policy of *The News*, it is hardly necessary to say that the interest of Colorado, material and social, will continue to engage the best efforts of its circulation, to the end that *The News* may assist all parts of the state, and all classes of people, without injuring any. In other words, the state first, last and all the time, will be the burden of our labors, even when party, locality, or corporate interests, might seem to otherwise demand. Upon this broad policy we look for success. Upon a policy less broad, comparative failure would be invited from the start. A residence of nineteen years in Colorado, during which period my time has largely been given to enterprises of a public nature, is the best pledge that can be offered in support of the general policy herein set forth.

Keeping in view the general and prevalent policy of the pioneer journal of the Rocky Mountain slope, *The News* will be democratic in politics, and will aim to set forth and sustain the recognized teachings of the party, so far as the same do not conflict with the local interests of the state. When conflict of that nature arises, *The News* will array itself upon the side of Colorado, and will seek, with all the means and influence it can command, to secure the needed reform within the party. Recognizing this commonwealth as in the infancy of a prosperous career, and as at the foundation of its building-up period, it follows that our material interests may rightfully claim the encouragement and protection of favoring legislation to a larger degree than those of older and more fully developed states.

The News has no enemies to punish, no friends to reward, and asks from the public, what it fully means to extend and merit, a helping hand in every effort that is right, proper, and calculated for the best good of the greatest number.

Captain James T. Smith will have editorial charge of *The News*, assisted by a corps of experienced writers, well qualified to gather *all* the news and present it in reliable and proper form.

W. A. H. Loveland

"Cap" Smith did not remain long with the *News* at this point. John M. Barret took over as editor in December, and the "Cap" apparently joined the staff of the *Transcript* in Golden.¹ But he returned to the

¹*Rocky Mountain News*, Aug. 24, 1879.

News later to occupy the chair of mining editor for nearly forty years. He became a living legend in Denver journalism and model for the principal character in Gene Fowler's novel, *Salute to Yesterday*. "Cap" affected a dark slouch hat, an Inverness cape, and a sword-cane, and his handwriting was such that there was never more than one printer in the composing room who could decipher the runic script with which he reported a never ending series of bonanzas in the Colorado hills.

Fowler asserts that Smith won his captaincy on an early morning when Cherry Creek, not yet corseted in concrete, went into one of its periodic spring floods. The waters swept up and carried away a square frame palace of pleasure in which Smith had sought shelter from the chills of the night.

Bellying "All hands on deck!" the veteran of Hampton Roads assisted the screaming ladies and their confused admirers to the roof. Fascinated spectators on high ground watched the captain-to-be minister to the hysteria of lovely women and at the same time apply the science of navigation to the swaying house of social charms.

Eye-witnesses commented upon the technical idiom of the skipper. His baritone—lately exercised in wassail—now outroared the waters. He was heard to command "Trim ship!" as the houseboat listed to port, and "Man the funnell!" when bricks from the chimney promised to maim the madam's personnel. . . .

At length the veteran of Hampton Roads maneuvered his listing craft toward the lee of a dismantled bridge. The warping of this ark to an emergency dock was a demonstration of maritime finesse. The master, roaring the while, made fast to a bulkhead, then halted a stampede of absent-minded males with the admonition:

"Women first, you foul weasels!"

He saw the ladies down a gangplank—in more congenial times the door of Madam Cunningham's bathroom. He permitted the cowed gentlemen to follow. Then, with a fine blue eye for saltwater etiquette . . . saluted and was the last to leave his sinking ship. He dived overboard and swam ashore.²

Some of the more enthusiastic admirers of this feat of gallant seamanship elevated Smith to the rank of "Admiral," but generally the nickname was "Cap," and it stuck for the rest of his life. Beyond, in fact. Nearly every newspaperman in Denver today knows of "Cap" Smith, but not one in a hundred knows his first name was James. No one knows what the "T." stood for; Fowler called him Trolley, and perhaps that's good enough.

In 1878, "Cap" was called from the staff of the poverty-stricken Denver *Democrat* to assist in the political conversion of "Old Reliable." The about-face created a sensation. Predictions were offered freely that

²Gene Fowler, *Salute to Yesterday* (New York, 1937), pp. 13-14.

the *News* was a stranded investment and would go under. Aside from Loveland and a young man named Tom Patterson, almost no one of consequence in Denver would admit to voting Democratic. One scandalized Republican took up his pen and indited a letter to the editor of the *Tribune*:

. . . Now, sir; this thing is an outrage on Denver. It is an outrage on the Republican party of the whole State. It is an outrage upon the commercial interests of Colorado because it [the *News*] passes into the hands of a great railroad monopoly. It is an outrage on subscribers because it proposes to give Democracy when Republicanism was contracted for. Because it proposes the advocacy of Golden City against Denver, when the promotion of Denver interest was subscribed for. It is a gross outrage because it proposes the advocacy of the railroad monopoly, when the advocacy and defense of the rights and interests of the people were subscribed for.

In fact a purchase for money, of the interests of peoples, parties and communities, without their knowledge and consent is beyond compare an attempt at the greatest possible tyranny. And no adequate rebuke would be possible, but for the righteous indignation it will arouse among Republicans all over the State, and among all the people of Denver without distinction of party. . . .

Every true Republican, I believe, will let the old paper lie in the bed its present sole proprietor is making for it. Every friend of Denver will rally to the support of papers owned by Denver men. . . .³

The *Times* forecast doom and debt for the Democratic *News*:

In purchasing the *News* Mr. Loveland has cabbaged a sort of white elephant. He has assumed the indebtedness of a \$20,000 mortgage held by a Republican, and has spent for it, besides that raised by his party supporters, as much as he would derive in the way of salary from a term of office as governor of the state; viz: five thousand dollars. All may go well during the heat and excitement of the campaign, but when the winter of discontent shall break o'er the *News*, and that mortgage shall come due next May, election times will then be gone, the good old Republican support gone, we predict the said paper will no longer be of use to the immortal Wm. A. H., and he will let her go back to her first love through the means of the mortgage held by that Arapahoe county Republican.

The *Times*' jab brought to light further details about the purchase transaction. Loveland, it developed, had put \$5000 of his own into the deal along with \$5000 from party angels, and he had assumed the \$20,000 mortgage on the publishing firm held by Byers' old Omaha friend, David H. Moffat, Jr., now a rising Denver banker and railroad financier. The

³Denver *Tribune*, July 17, 1878.

dire predictions, however, were not borne out. On May 11, 1879, the *News* was cleared of the mortgage, and within a few years a leading Republican politician would offer \$250,000 for the paper.

The new proprietor was, like Byers, a pioneer. But he had cast his lot initially with Golden City, and intertown rivalries died hard. Byers and Loveland were acquainted through the frontier years, but they traveled in different circles and seldom saw eye to eye, although the *News*, recognizing Loveland's leadership in the foothills city, had endorsed him for the state House of Representatives in 1861. It was Loveland more than any other man who had been responsible for the temporary location of the territorial capital in Golden. Moreover he was on the other side of the fence from the Evans-Moffat-Byers crowd on the matter of bringing the iron horse to Colorado. He was the organizer and president of the Colorado Central Railroad, and had proposed to bring the main line down along the foothills to Golden. Denver would be served by a spur. Denver remembered and never forgave the effrontery.

Loveland was born May 30, 1826, in Chatham, Massachusetts, the son of a Yankee sailor who was captured by the British in the War of 1812. The father, Leonard, was an early settler in the Ohio Valley, and the town of Loveland, Ohio, is named for him. William was reared in frontier Illinois. As a young man he became a wagon master in the Mexican War. He was along on the campaign from Vera Cruz to Mexico City, and in the assault on Chapultepec Heights in September 1847 was wounded in the leg by an artillery shell fragment. Invalided home to Illinois, he had just established himself in the mercantile business when the rush to the California gold fields began.

He packed up and set out across the plains in May of 1849 and reputedly built the first house in Grass Valley, California. Success escaped him as a gold miner, however, and he was back in Brighton, Illinois, in 1851. But his restless feet responded again when word came that gold had been found at Pike's Peak. He struck west in the great wave of the fifty-niners, but this time as a merchant rather than a miner. He brought with him a wagon train of merchandise, and in June he built the first store in Golden, hard by the swarming trail to the Gregory Diggings.

Henceforth Loveland was Golden's first citizen. He opened the first coal mine and started a brick and pottery works, drawing on the clays which since have made Golden world-famous for scientific ceramics. Soon after he built the first wagon road up Clear Creek Cañon he became interested in the possibilities of a railroad over the mountains to Salt Lake City. He financed a survey and as early as 1866 had a charter from the territorial legislature for his Colorado Central & Pacific Railroad.⁴

In the scramble of railroad construction during the late sixties and

⁴Biographical data from Loveland family papers, courtesy Hobart Loveland of Nanuet, New York, grandson of W. A. H., and Harold M. Dunning, Loveland, Colorado; see also Ferri, *op. cit.*, pp. 278-79.

early seventies Loveland built his Colorado Central as a broad-gauge line between Golden and Denver and through northern Colorado, and as a narrow-gauge track up Clear Creek Cañon to Black Hawk and the mines of the Little Kingdom of Gilpin. He played the Union Pacific and the Kansas Pacific against each other, accepting support from the two giants alternately. In the process he kept the Denver Pacific crowd stewing lest Golden instead of Denver become the major rail center of Colorado. During the manipulations Loveland was temporarily forced out of the presidency of the Colorado Central but remained in close touch as vice-president. In the early seventies Jay Gould had entered the Colorado railroad wars. He gained control of the Kansas Pacific and was plotting toward the forced consolidation with the Union Pacific which came in 1880.

Gould seized the Denver Pacific from the Evans group in Denver, and the plan was to consolidate the KP and the Colorado Central, which was in financial trouble, into one line. But this would have firmed up Denver's position as rail center and left Golden only a way station en route to the mining country. Meanwhile the Union Pacific played into Gould's hands by taking the Colorado Central into court and forcing receivership on a \$1,500,000 bill for materials and rolling stock.

Loveland acted with vigor and directness against the double threat to his railroad and his town. He took the chair at the Colorado Central's annual meeting May 18 and 19, 1876, in Golden, summarily threw out the proxy votes which would have approved consolidation with the Kansas Pacific, and then seized control of the Central's property. His men "slept on their guns" in the roundhouse and shops.⁵

The immediate threat of forced consolidation disposed of, Loveland had to do something about the threatened receivership, which would have resulted in the same undesirable wedding by only slightly slower means.

Circuit Judge Amherst W. Stone was scheduled to hold court in Boulder, north of Golden, on August 15, 1876, and it was common knowledge that he would appoint David H. Moffat, Jr., as receiver for the Colorado Central. Moffat held an interest in Gould's Kansas Pacific, and the foothill and mountain counties, which were with Loveland in the fight, denounced his impending appointment as a cold-deck deal.

But Judge Stone didn't reach Boulder that day. The Denver-Boulder train on which he was riding was stopped by a barricade of ties on the tracks at Kenneer's Lake, midway on the journey. A band of masked men boarded the train, and one of them waved a big gun under the judicial nose.

"My God!" said the judge.

"Never mind," replied the masked man. "Come on."

⁵M. C. Poor, *Denver, South Park & Pacific* (Denver, 1949), pp. 10, 23, 26, 63ff.

Sam Browne, onetime territorial attorney general and then counsel for the petitioners in the receivership, arose from a nearby seat and sought to enter a demurrer.

"I protest against this indignity——"

A hog leg was waved in his direction. "Sit down." Browne sat.

The judge was assisted from the train, placed in a waiting carriage, and under escort of armed and masked riders was driven to the mouth of Coal Creek Cañon. The judge was treated with firmness but courtesy. He was told that from this point the rest of the journey would be on horseback.

"I can't ride," he protested; "I don't know anything about riding a horse."

"You are safe; get on and we'll have a man lead the horse. No trouble. No danger."

The jurist was led to a high point at the base of a cliff in the foothills, from which the prairie could be scanned with field glasses for many miles. A lazy day was spent lolling in the shade of the pines. After dark Judge Stone was brought down to the plains again, and at eleven-thirty placed in a closed carriage driven by two of his captors. Sometime after midnight he was deposited in front of the Alvord House in Denver and bade good night.

The bold raid had Denver on edge through the day. The *News* and the other papers got out extras. There was a rumor Judge Stone had been lynched in Golden Gate Cañon. Governor Routt called out the militia and dispatched a unit by special train, with a brass cannon on a flatcar, to Boulder.

There was no doubt in anyone's mind about who was behind the sally, but the identity of the masked abductors remained a secret for sixty years. In 1936, Carlos W. Lake, by then president of the Colorado Pioneer Society, addressed a meeting of the bar association in Denver and told the whole story. He said he and Mott Johnson, afterward a noted sheriff of Jefferson County, had been detailed by the board of directors of the Colorado Central to organize a fourteen-man party and rob the train of its judicial cargo. Lake confessed it was he who applied the .45-caliber persuader to Judge Stone aboard the train.⁶

Strangely enough the Colorado Central's strong-arm tactics worked—in combination with some further stubbornness and a lot of legal obfuscation and delay. Judge Stone, of course, got to Boulder next day (under military guard) and placed receiver Moffat in office. The Colorado Central then simply refused to grant him possession and ignored a supporting writ issued by Judge Stone a few days later.

Loveland managed to retain his hold. He kept the issue seesawing in the courts for more than a year, parried another Union Pacific suit for

⁶Carlos W. Lake, "The Kidnaping of Judge A. W. Stone," *Colorado Magazine*, Vol. XVII, No. 1 (Jan. 1940), pp. 19ff.

two million dollars, and finally won a capitulation in which he was to be retained at the head of the Colorado Central and all litigation would be dropped. Loveland wound up a director of the Union Pacific, and the construction of his railroad was pushed forward through northern Colorado. In 1877 the town of Loveland was laid out in Larimer County fifty miles north of Denver and named for him. An automobile road, one of the highest year-round routes in America, now carries trans-continental Highway 6 across the Continental Divide through 11,992-foot Loveland Pass at the head of the south fork of Clear Creek. Loveland once visioned a railroad over the same route.

The audacious maneuverings of the mutton-chopped hero of Chapultepec apparently won the admiration of Jay Gould, although the tactics delayed his conquest of the Colorado railroads for several years. They became good friends, visited each other in New York and Golden, and corresponded intimately on railroad affairs. The intimacy did not help Loveland's political aspirations; Denver and most of Colorado bitterly resented the rail monopoly Gould soon established. Loveland's *News* was nicknamed "The Tow Line" by the opposition papers, which charged that Gould led Loveland around on a leash.

Like many another magnate of his time and since, Loveland in buying the *News* was less interested in the practice of journalism than in the political power of the press. He had been active in Colorado politics ever since the constitutional convention for Jefferson Territory in 1859. In 1861 he was chairman of the convention called to set up a provisional government for the territory of Colorado, and in 1864 of a statehood convention. He served for nine years in the territorial Senate. He also accomplished the multiple feat of serving simultaneously on the boards of county commissioners of five counties—Gilpin, Clear Creek, Jefferson, Boulder, and Larimer—contrary residence requirements notwithstanding.

Loveland wanted to be governor of Colorado. The purchase of the *News* and its abrupt political metamorphosis were intended to realize that ambition. On the same day, July 17, 1878, that Loveland was declaring his editorial policies for the *News*, the Democrats were holding their convention in Pueblo. Loveland was nominated.

The campaign was a rigorous one. Loveland was denounced as a railroad monopolist and the tool of Gould. The Democratic papers, including the *News*, hung the tag of "carpetbagger" on his opponent, Frederick W. Pitkin of Ouray, newly a resident of the state. But in the election on October 2, Pitkin won, 14,308 votes to 11,535. The Republicans also swept the state legislature, and it was with less hope than courtesy to a defeated standard-bearer that the Democrats presented Loveland's name as a candidate for the United States Senate when the legislators gathered in Walhalla Hall in January 1879. The Republicans in the legislature, which then elected senators, passed blithely over the minority nomination and chose Nathaniel P. Hill, the professor-chemist-

smelterman who had grown rich on his process for the extraction of metals from Colorado ores.

Loveland remained an active Democratic leader for many years. Never successful as a candidate, his political career's high point probably came in June 1880 at the Democratic National Convention in Cincinnati. He was one of Colorado's six delegates, and he received five favorite-son votes for President on the first ballot.

Things were tough all over for Colorado Democrats in the early days.

Down in the remote high country of the southwestern part of the state a renegade Republican of odd appetites ate five of the seven Democrats in Hinsdale County, according to a favorite legend.⁷

The political affiliations are myth; the cannibalism is not. Alfred Packer had engaged to lead a party of prospectors from Provo, Utah, to a new strike in the Colorado mountains. Sometime between February 9 and April 16 of 1874 the six men became trapped in a snowstorm and lost their way high in the rugged San Juans. On the latter date Packer walked into the Los Pinos Indian Agency carrying live coals in a coffeepot. He had run out of matches, he explained, and had to carry his campfire with him.

Packer appeared to be very sleek and well fed for a man lost sixty days in wild, unnourishing country. Under questioning he broke down and confessed that his five companions had died or killed each other, or he had killed them, and he had been living off portions of their bodies. The man-eater escaped jail in Saguache but was recaptured in 1883 in Wyoming and brought to trial at Lake City. Folklore insists that Judge Melville B. Gerry, an old-school Southern gentleman from Georgia, meted out the death sentence in this fashion:

"Stan' up, yah voracious man eating son of a bitch, stand up!

"They was sivin Dimmicrats in Hinsdale County, and ye eat five of thim, God damn ye!

"I sintins ye t'be hanged by the neck until ye're dead, dead, DEAD, as a warnin' ag'in reducin' the Dimmycratic population of th' state."⁸

Another version of the sentencing has Judge Gerry saying: "Alfred Packer, you voracious Republican cannibal, I would sentence you to hell but the statutes forbid it."⁹

Actually Gerry lectured Packer with "awful solemnity" and reviewed his crime with a good deal of compassion:

. . . To other sickening details of your crime I will not refer. Silence is kindness. I do not say things to harrow your soul, for I know you have drunk the cup of bitterness to its very dregs, and wherever you

⁷*Rocky Mountain News*, Mar. 13, 1883.

⁸*Lake City Silver World*, Nov. 1930.

⁹*Rocky Mountain Herald*, June 13, 1942.

have gone the sting of your conscience and the goadings of remorse have been an avenging Nemesis which have followed your every turn in life and painted afresh for your contemplation the picture of the past. . . . Be not deceived, God is not mocked, for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. You, Alfred Packer, sowed the wind; you must now reap the whirlwind. . . . Prepare to meet thy God; prepare to meet the spirits of thy murdered victims. . . . For nine long years you have been a wanderer, upon the face of the earth, bowed and broken in spirit; no home, no loves, no ties to bind you to earth. You have been, indeed, a poor, pitiable waif of humanity. I hope and pray that in the spirit land to which you are so fast and surely drifting, you will find that peace and rest for your weary spirit which this world cannot give. . . .

Then, his voice failing for a time, the judge pronounced sentence, firmly and with triple emphasis:

. . . on said 19th day of May, A.D., 1883 . . . you, then and there, by said Sheriff, be hung by the neck until you are dead, dead, dead, and may God have mercy upon your soul.¹⁰

Packer won a Supreme Court reversal of the death sentence and was given a second trial in Gunnison. This time he was sentenced to forty years in the state prison for manslaughter. He was paroled on January 8, 1901, and came to live in a little shack near the Denver suburb of Littleton, a quiet, retiring old man loved by the children of the neighborhood. Packer died April 23, 1907, and was buried in the Littleton cemetery. There, on September 22, 1940, Bishop Frank Hamilton Rice of the Liberal Church Inc., the friend and champion of Denver's skid-row bums, officially laid the ghost of Packer the Man-Eater.

Six of Bishop Rice's followers, wearing monkish robes and masks and chained together, filed to the grave leading Angelica, a white angora nanny goat. One of the robed figures was barefoot, representing Packer. The others were the ghosts of his victims. Goat milk was poured on the modest tombstone. Then Bishop Rice read a ceremony which transferred Packer's sins to the scapegoat. He cited Scripture—Leviticus 26:29, Deuteronomy 28:53-57, Jeremiah and Ezekiel—which he said looked with compassion on cannibalism. "Therefore, Alfred Packer," he concluded, "we won't hold that against you." It was reported that Angelica accepted her burden meekly.¹¹

During their dismal misfortunes of the New Deal days Colorado Republicans organized a Packer Club. Members carried cards bearing a picture of Packer and the pledge: "I agree to eliminat five Nu Deal

¹⁰*Rocky Mountain News*, Apr. 14, 1883; quoted in Paul H. Gantt, *The Case of Alfred Packer the Man-Eater* (Denver, 1952), pp. 73-75.

¹¹Gantt, op. cit., pp. 111-14.

Dimmycrats witch makes me a mimber of th' Packer Club of Colorado." Charter members were Ralph L. Carr, later governor of Colorado; writer Gene Fowler, who told Packer's story in his *Timber Line*; and Denver attorneys Fred M. Mazzulla and H. Dick Davis.

If Packer was a trifle ardent as a Republican, W. A. H. Loveland was ahead of his time as a Democrat. Colorado was a solidly Republican state from the beginning. It did not elect a Democratic governor until 1883, and then only because the dominant party got to squabbling within itself. There wouldn't be a Colorado Democrat in the Senate until after the turn of the century, when Populism and the issue of free coinage of silver blew party lines sky high in the West.

During Loveland's political-minded ownership the *News* became for the third time a member of a "family" of newspapers. On January 1, 1880, Loveland founded the *Leadville Democrat*, the fifth daily paper in the then new and booming silver camp two miles high in the Rockies. The *News* of January 4 hailed the first number of "our young brother" and said it was patterned, politically and typographically, on "Old Reliable." The Rocky Mountain News Printing Company also had begun publication on July 16, 1879, of the semiweekly *Colorado Post*, a German-language paper.

In spite of defeats at the polls the *News* clung faithfully to its party. When the Denver *Democrat* finally gave up in June 1879 and became overnight the *Republican*, Senator Hill's organ, the *News*' funnybone was tickled by the three-pronged Republican opposition:

Now pitch in. We will cheer the victor, nurse the wounded and bury the slain. Let the Tribune pour a broadside into the Republican and show it up to be a fraud, and while the Times exposes the cussedness of the Tribune the Republican can strike hands with the latter and crush the Times. The very breeze smells of sulphur.¹²

Denver, meanwhile, was enjoying a rapid growth. Settlers were arriving at the rate of a hundred a day, the *News* estimated on July 8, 1879. The new silver strikes, smelting, and the proliferation of railroads all contributed to the boom times. Loveland was deep in railroading and smelting. He could afford to dabble in newspapering and politics. Then, to relieve still further the smarts of his defeats, he hit it rich with his Fanny Barret silver mine in the Mosquito Range. The Fanny and other ventures made him a notable silver king in an era of much conspicuous wealth.

Denver at this time also was entering upon a long-lasting vogue as a health resort. The "climate cure" was being prescribed for tuberculosis, and the new railroads brought thousands of sufferers to Colorado's high, dry sunshine. Many of them remained to become leading citizens in

¹²*Rocky Mountain News*, June 5, 1879.

business, the professions, and the arts. P. T. Barnum commented on one of his visits that Coloradans were the most disappointed people he ever saw. "Two-thirds of them came here to die," he said, "and they can't do it. The wonderful air brings them back from the verge of the tomb." (Barnum's puff was not entirely a disinterested one. He had purchased an area still named for him and was in the business of selling town lots for a subdivision.)

Hundreds of sanatoria were built. Tent colonies for open-air living dotted the suburban fringe. The tide of health seekers lasted fifty years or more, and the tubercle bacillus has always been credited as a factor in Denver's growth. The fresh-air treatment and the rest homes it brought into being also supplied the impetus which carried the city into front rank as a center for medical education and research.

As Pullman's "palace cars" came into service fashionable tourists began flocking to Denver too. One of the distinguished sight-seers of the time was Joaquin Miller, who described Denver admiringly as "Queen of the Tawny Desert." The *News* of May 25, 1879, wasn't exactly sure the California poet's nickname was wholly flattering. Colorado was being boomed as a lush land of milk and honey, and any hint of aridity was not appreciated.

Another visitor was Miss Emily Faithful, an Englishwoman of delicate airs and elegant tastes. She liked what she saw in the little city only twenty years away from log cabins. In her travel book, *Three Trips to America*, published in 1884, she commented:

The Tabor Opera House justly ranks as one of the finest theatres in America. . . . I not only heard Gerster sing but saw the rank, fashion and beauty of the city assembled to welcome her. Patti received an immense ovation the next day. . . .

The streets are full of activity; there are fine houses and fast horses; carriages are to be seen with heraldic crests familiar to Europeans but somewhat out of place in this land of equality. . . . Considerable extravagance is also to be seen—gorgeous clothes and pretentious entertainments; but at the same time there is energy and liberality—schools have been built, an excellent university opened and, if Denver has the faults, she also has the virtues of a new wealthy Western city. . . .

Walt Whitman also came west. Crossing the plains from Topeka to Denver, he saw "a variety of country, but all unmistakably prolific, western, American, and on the largest scale." The *News* of September 20, 1879, reported his arrival: "Walt Whitman, the venerable poet, in company with a party of friends is in the city." But Jay Gould had arrived at the same time, and he took all the play in the papers. Railroads were far more important than poetry to a town which was in a hurry to grow up.

Whitman roamed the streets and visited the smelters, where he saw

\$20,000 silver bricks in casual piles of twenty each. Unbashfully he submitted a written interview with himself to the *Tribune*, speaking of a great affection for a city of "climatic magnetism" and "delicious air." Denver, he said, was a town one "suddenly loves and hardly knows why."¹³

He made the narrow-gauge tour up to Leadville, and in the gorge of Platte Cañon he found the natural model for the formless, "heaven-ambitious" style and spirit of his own verse. "I have found the law of my own poems," was the unspoken but more-and-more decided feeling that came to me," he wrote in *Specimen Days*.¹⁴ Here was "grim yet joyous elemental abandon . . . plenitude of material . . . entire absence of art . . . untrammel'd play of primitive Nature. . . ." The cañon of the Platte appears in *Leaves of Grass* as

Spirit that form'd this scene,
These tumbled rock-piles grim and red,
These reckless heaven-ambitious peaks,
These gorges, turbulent-clear streams, this naked freshness,
These formless wild arrays, for reasons of their own,
I know thee, savage spirit—we have communed together,
Mine too such wild arrays, for reasons of their own. . . .

"Yes," Whitman wrote as he headed back toward St. Louis, "I fell in love with Denver, and even felt a wish to spend my declining and dying days there."

By 1880, Denver's population had jumped to 35,600, and that figure would be tripled to 106,700 in the 1890 census. A bustling town, and everything was proudly modern. In 1879, only a year after the first switchboard had gone into operation with twenty-one subscribers at New Haven, Connecticut, Denver had not one but two telephone systems. F. O. Vaille began preparations for a network using Bell's device in the fall of 1878 and by February 20, 1879, he was open for service to two hundred patrons. Six months later a competing system using the Edison telephone was introduced by the Western Union Telegraph Company. The disadvantages of two conflicting services became immediately apparent, however, and in 1880 there was a merger to the Bell system.

The *News* greeted the telephone as the "galvanic muttering machine" and took note that patrons could not restrain themselves from shouting into the mouthpiece. The advantages of the apparatus to the gathering of news were quickly recognized, however, and in 1880 the paper installed a set of phones, each with bell crank and individually equipped with a mass of wires and storage batteries.

¹³Rollo G. Silver, "Whitman Interviews Himself," *American Literature*, Vol. X, No. 1 (Mar. 1938), p. 84.

¹⁴*Complete Prose Works of Walt Whitman* (New York, 1914), p. 136.

Concurrently the electric lights were going on in Denver. Paris had been the first city to use electric street lighting during the Universal Exposition of 1878, and in this country Cleveland followed with arc lamps the next year. Early in 1880, Denver began turning out the gas lamps on her streets and replacing them with electric lights. Smiley says his home town was "probably the third—certainly the fourth—city in the world" to use incandescent lamps for street illumination. After some experimentation with small, individual lights at street corners, Denver adopted a novel system for piercing the gloom of its downtown district. In 1883 fifteen steel towers one hundred and fifty feet high were erected at strategic points. From the top of each tower six 3000-candlepower Brush arc lights poured illumination over the surrounding streets. The towers, which dominated the city's squat sky line, remained in use for about ten years.

Denver was a proud, even vainglorious, little city. She preened herself on her alertness in being among the municipal pioneers of streetcars, telephones, and electric lighting. But she also pleased herself with her own brand of superior insularity. The *News* of March 24, 1880, noted that "Denver is like Paris in this respect, that its own affairs interest its people more than distant events do. We have a little world of our own."

The city advanced and strutted, and the *News* expanded with it. Much of the journalistic progress can be attributed to the talents of John M. Barret, installed by Loveland as his editor in December 1878. Barret was a Kentuckian, a law graduate of Center College, and he served with the Rebel army in the Civil War. When the war was over he became an editor of the New Orleans *Picayune* and then edited both the *Times* and the *Republican* in St. Louis and the *Sedalia, Missouri, Democrat* before Loveland brought him to Denver.

Barret became "the chief of the *News*" and the best-known newspaperman of his day in Colorado. Within a few months, despite espousal of the minority political cause, Barret raised the circulation of the *News* from 2300 to 5000. William Vickers, his predecessor as chief editor of the *News*, wrote:

The *News*, losing the patronage that had clung to it through Republican ownership, was regarded as a stranded investment. The subscription list had dwindled to a beggarly edition, and old publishers predicted its suspension at the close of the campaign. But with the indomitable energy that has since characterized his management, Mr. Barret took the *News*, infused life into its editorial pages, and made its news columns bristle with fresh and sparkling intelligence that gave the paper a strong foothold which has since been fostered and strengthened, until today it is regarded as a most important factor in educating public opinion in Colorado.¹⁵

¹⁵William B. Vickers, *History of Denver* (Chicago, 1880), pp. 319-20.

The paper was now selling for five cents a copy, six days a week. There was no Monday edition. By carrier or mail, subscribers could have the *News* for twenty-five cents a week, \$1.00 a month, \$2.50 for three months, \$5.00 for six, or \$10 a year. The weekly paper went for \$2.00 a year.

On July 4, 1879, Barret enlarged and changed the format of his paper. It had been appearing for years as a nine-column "blanket" folio of four pages. Now it came forth in a six-column quarto of eight pages as a result, it was stated, of "constantly increasing advertising patronage." Moreover the Sunday issue became a mammoth twelve-page edition filled with social, literary, and sporting news along with the hammer-and-tongs politics. "On top as usual," the paper boasted, "and we propose to stay there. . . . Pretty as a school girl, The *News* comes out in its best bib and tucker."

Nine days later, on July 13, the *News* announced it had a remedy for the late appearance of the paper on the streets. The expanded size had made the press runs longer, it was explained, but now a new Cottrell & Babcock press had been constructed for the *News* in the East. It would be able to turn out "3000 IMPRESSIONS AN HOUR!" The new press was in operation on July 27, and the plant also added a quarto medium Gordon job press. There were now five presses in the office, and James Beattie was the press foreman.

A book review column was added, and illustrations now began to appear occasionally. One of the first had been printed on January 19 and amounted to a generous salute to the political victor by the vanquished. It was a wood engraving of Senator Nathaniel P. Hill, the man who got the post Loveland had wanted. Woodcuts had been common in the advertising columns of the paper for several years, but only rarely did it occur to the editors that news stories could be illustrated. A two-column woodcut of the first building at the new state agricultural college in Fort Collins was printed on July 27, but the next notable feat of illustrated journalism did not come until January 1, 1880, when the *News* sent to the Photo-Electro Company of Boston to have a four-and-a-half-column cut made of a view of the new town of Leadville. This twenty-eight-page New Year edition also contained a number of two-and-one-column woodcuts of stores and buildings, many of them probably engraved in Denver by J. M. Bagley, who had done the portrait of Senator Hill. On June 17, 1881, the *News* put its first picture on page one—a likeness of James Moon, desperado, who on the day previous had received a fatal dose of lead in the Arcade Saloon on Larimer Street. The illustration was a "kaolotype"—a chalk, scratch-block technique—by the Mills Engr. Company, a resident of the News Block but apparently an independent organization. The picture didn't print very well. Stereotyping was not yet in use, and the fragile, gouged-out lines on the

chalk surface couldn't stand the poundings of the giant Cottrell & Babcock at its mad pace.

The Press Club met on July 5, 1879, at the home of Wolfe Londoner, a rotund grocer who later was elected mayor and who enjoyed great popularity among the newspapermen because of his well-stocked cellar. The name of J. E. Leet of the *News* was proposed to the meeting for membership. In a few years Leet would become one of the festive circle of antic journalists which centered on Eugene Field. Another addition to the *News* editorial staff in 1879 was J. S. Dickerson, late of the Indianapolis *Sentinel*. Other members of Barret's staff included "Cap" Smith and John McKenna, and there were occasional contributions from John McCarthy, who wrote under the nom de plume of Fitz-Mac, and William F. Stapleton, later managing editor.

Promotional and special-edition journalism was beginning in Denver at this time. The *News* began publishing elaborate New Year editions, and on April 23, 1879, it marked its twentieth anniversary with some prominence. An illustrated annual of the history of Colorado was offered to subscribers on January 1, 1882. By April 7 the bait was George A. Crofutt's *Grip-Sack Guide of Colorado*, "a complete encyclopedia of the state; resources and condensed authentic descriptions of every city, town, village, station, post office and important mining camp . . . where to hunt, fish and view the most magnificent scenery in the world. . . ." The following year the *News* prepared its own *Colorado Condensed* pamphlet, partly for the tourist trade and partly to boost circulation. Calcium lights were brought out into Larimer Street to whoop it up for the election returns on the night of November 2, 1880.

Editorially the paper boasted that it was "not a corporation sheet," and proved it by coming out strongly for the income tax and the laboring man. It also was campaigning at white heat for free coinage of silver and at somewhat more reasonable temperature for a sanitary sewer system.

In its Democratic affection for the workingman and his vote the *News* fanned the flames of public violence in these years with as dishonorable a result, in retrospective view, as the bloodthirstiness with which it had promoted and justified the Sand Creek Massacre.

Thousands of Chinese laborers had been imported as railroad track laborers, particularly by the Central Pacific, in the building of the transcontinental line. Some of them came on to Denver after the Denver Pacific was completed in 1870, and slowly a small Chinatown grew up in the lower downtown area bounded by Sixteenth, Eighteenth, Blake, and Wazee streets. The census for 1880 shows that 238 Chinese, most of the men still wearing pigtails, were living in Denver.

The *News* contended that the Chinese worked for nothing and ate mice. Their undercutting effect on wage rates was such that the American

workman couldn't compete. The Chinaman, like the Ute, would have to go. A reporter was sent down to Chinatown for an on-the-scene report. He discovered for the paper of March 28, 1880, a scandalous nest of opium dens and about a hundred and fifty residents, most of them washermen. Of the population, only thirteen were women, and of these, three were the wives of gainfully employed (if mouse-eating) husbands. The other ten were ladies "of easy virtue or no virtue."

The Chinese became a major political issue in the West during the 1880 campaign of James A. Garfield, and the *News* contributed its share to the angry emotions. As election day approached, the fever grew. The riot came on October 31.

Several railroad toughs under a head of payday steam entered a saloon on Wazee Street near Sixteenth and found two Chinese there. They hit one of them over the head with a billiard cue. The other drew a pistol and took a badly aimed shot at his tormentors. Within a few minutes word had spread through town that a Chinaman had killed a white man. A mob formed and began to ransack Chinatown, seeking victims. Windows were broken, doors pushed in, and shanties pulled down. The Chinese were beaten, hounded, and their pigtailed tied together. Before the twenty-five-man police force and a volunteer fire company with hoses could break up the riot one inoffensive old man had been hanged from a lamppost opposite the Markham Hotel.

In a few days the excitement died away. The Chinese colony, as time went on, grew slightly and continued to hold a modest place in the community. Its few score wage earners did not noticeably subvert Anglo-Saxon civilization or undermine prosperity. They moved quietly through the city's streets and customs with a profound Eastern courtesy and dignity, accepting their lot and improving it. But it would be decades after the 1880 riot before Denver would remember it with any uneasy feeling that decency had been violated. In the seventies and eighties the days were too golden, abundant destiny too glorious, to permit such gloomy philosophies.

Something of the spirit of the times is captured in a bit of doggerel which was warmly applauded by civic nabobs gathered for a meeting of the Manufacturers' Exchange:

Ode to Denver

All hail to thee, City of Denver!
Bright gem of the Centennial State.
Thy history is brief, yet as brilliant
As the gold from thy mountains so great.
The range of the Rockies engird thee,
Their snow peaks like sentinels stand.
The breath from their pinnacles nerve thee
To a destiny lofty and grand.

Chorus—

Our song then for Denver the Peerless,
 Shall roll down from Mountain to Sea;
 As leaps through the Canon the Cascade,
 So our hearts leap at mention of thee.
 San Francisco and New York, our gateways,
 Through which come all lands east and west;
 Chicago, the lap of our riches,
 Kansas City and St. Louis fair breasts.
 But Denver still shines as the Jewel
 Aloft on Columbia's brow,
 Her diadem rich Colorado,
 Crown of glory and always as now.

With health for the sick and wealth for the poor,
 And a tree shaded homestead for all;
 Sparkling rivulets flowing past every door.
 Gardens echoing turtledove's call.
 Surely this was the vision across the wide plains,
 Weary Pike's Peak pilgrims saw
 A city where Liberty equally reigns,
 The home of Virtue and Law.¹⁶

The "ode" was not merely read to the meeting, nor printed offhand in the program. It was set to music and sung by a male quartet.

As Denver moved into the 1880s hymning herself such music, a new name entered into the continuing story of the *Rocky Mountain News*. The paper announced on June 15, 1880, that John Arkins had purchased a part interest from Loveland and henceforth would direct the general management. John Barret would continue as editor in chief, and there would be no change in politics. Arkins had bought a quarter interest, and in the reorganization of the company Loveland continued as president, Arkins became vice-president, Gus Alden secretary, and Frank W. Loveland, son of the principal owner, treasurer.

Arkins was Irish, dashing, and handsome. He became the "glamorous gladiator" of Denver journalism, and his wit gave the nation a widely reported anecdote to chuckle over. On a visit to New York, Arkins was interviewed by a big-time reporter much concerned over the burning issue of a site for the forthcoming World's Fair.

"Colonel Arkins," the newsman asked, "where do you think the World's Fair should be held?"

"Around the waist," Arkins answered.

¹⁶Programme, Manufacturers' Exchange, Oct. 3, 1885; Woodbury scrapbook.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

Eugene Field in Denver

OUR ESTEEMED CONTEMPORARY

This Awkward sheet is our Esteemed Contemporary. It is Run by an Unhung Felon. We would not Give him a Glass of Water to Save his Life, but we would Take a Beer with him if we were Properly Approached. Our esteemed Contemporary has no Circulation and its influence is Correspondingly Small. It cuts Advertising Rates and is So Mean it would Skin a Skunk to Save a Scent. If we had Our Way, we would Suspend our Esteemed Contemporary and Put its Editors and Reporters in Jail where they belong.

THE sketch is from *The Tribune Primer* by Eugene Field, who was managing editor of the *Denver Tribune* from 1881 to August 1883, and who is best remembered in Denver, not for the boozily sentimental children's verse which charmed the contentedly teary American *fin de siècle*, but for his practical jokes. These were sometimes as crude as putting a cannon cracker in a roast turkey at a banquet, or as inspired as impersonating Oscar Wilde.

The "esteemed contemporary" of Field's portrait can only have been Arkins' *Rocky Mountain News*. For while the *Tribune* often squabbled with or sniped at the other Republican dailies—the *Times* and the *Republican*—all three of them reserved their best insults for the Democratic *News*. As the dominant paper, the venerable pioneer, it was the No. 1 bear for their baiting. Moreover its political creed was popular with no one in an era when wealth gushed from the mountains endlessly and anyone who was anybody was either a millionaire or about to be. Popular with no one, apparently, except the man in the street who bought a daily paper, owned no silver mines, and was yet to make his voice heard at the Colorado polls in the face of skillful ballot-box stuffing and voting of gravestones. The Republicans were pious, rich, and determined to keep on winning, and three fourths of the Denver press served their intentions.

When Arkins took over operating control of the *News* the little city of Denver was entering upon a silver-lined decade of showy affluence. Gold had created the town, but it was the white metal which put Tiffany door-knobs in the brownstone mansions on newly aristocratic Capitol Hill,

popped the corks on an ocean of Mumm's, and blazoned sometimes questionable heraldic crests on the glistening broughams. There wasn't a native son in town old enough to grow a beard, but Denver was acquiring the airs of London and the manners of Pompeii.

Much of the wealth was rolling down from Leadville, ten thousand feet in the clouds on the other side of the Mosquito Range from South Park. There, at the foot of Colorado's loftiest peaks, the silver lodes were discovered in 1878. Within two years the town had a 15,000 population and four daily newspapers. Soon it blossomed out with an opera house and a theater seating five thousand in four tiers of gilt boxes. In the space of ten years Leadville showered more than a hundred million dollars down on Denver.

Two of America's most famous fortunes got their start in the Leadville mines. Marshall Field took a gamble on the Chrysolite mine, hit the jackpot, and compounded his immense profits as Chicago's merchant prince. Meyer Guggenheim and his seven sons built their world-wide financial empire on a watered Leadville mine and Colorado smelters which later swallowed up the giant American Smelting & Refining Company.

The same Chrysolite mine which gave its blessings to Marshall Field also was one of the sources of the H. A. W. Tabor fortune. Tabor, an indigent Vermont stonecutter, became Colorado's most fabled silver king. His personal income in 1882 was estimated at four million dollars. Most of it came from the Little Pittsburgh and the Matchless mines, but the Chrysolite contributed its share. And the Chrysolite was supposed to be a hoax. Legend insists that "Chicken Bill" Lovell salted the Chrysolite when he sold it to Tabor for nine hundred dollars—and moreover got the high-grade ore for the salting from Tabor's own Little Pittsburgh. Tabor sank the shaft another ten feet and hit a lode which produced three millions. The Tabor lucky streak began one May morning in 1878 when he grubstaked two prospectors to about seventeen dollars in groceries in return for a third interest in anything they found. They found the Little Pittsburgh, incorporated that fall at twenty million.

Tabor built Leadville its opera house and then moved down to Denver to look after his growing interests, which included half the First National Bank. He put up a sixty-thousand-dollar mansion for his faithful, strait-laced wife Augusta, who wore a pince-nez and a green-persimmon expression. With stone imported from Ohio he constructed the towering, six-story Tabor Block, still standing at Sixteenth and Larimer streets. He became part owner of the plush Windsor Hotel, which also survives on now tawdry Larimer Street but recently had to be rescued as a historical landmark.

Finally, to crown his civic glory, Tabor opened on September 5, 1881, the Tabor Grand Opera House (now a movie house) with Emma Abbott singing *Lucia* to the most *recherché* audience Denver had produced to

date. The opera house was fitted out with carpets from Brussels, French brocades and tapestries, Japanese cherry wood, mahogany from Honduras, and a painting of H.A.W. The story goes that the niche had been intended for the Bard. Tabor, who supervised every detail, had happened by while the artist was at work on the portrait. He wanted to know who was being painted. His comment has become part of the enduring folklore of Denver:

"Willum Shakespeare? Who's Willum Shakespeare and what in hell did he ever do fer Colorado? Paint him out and put me up thar."

Tabor's millions got him into a lively scandal and the United States Senate (for thirty days, on a vacancy appointment). Flitting around Denver at the time, and hailed as the most beautiful woman in Colorado, was a blonde divorcee with a creamy expression and tiptilted nose. Her name was Elizabeth Bonduel McCourt, but everyone called her "Baby Doe." She had just won a divorce from her husband, Harvey Doe, by personally leading a raid on a popular bagnio and dragging him away from his scarlet diversions practically by the ear. Tabor reportedly paid a thousand dollars for an introduction to Baby Doe and soon she was installed as his mistress in a luxurious suite at the Clarendon Hotel in Leadville. Their affair was common gossip, and tongues flapped. Old-line society—anyone in Denver whose wealth and social standing dated back in excess of two years—looked down its nose at the coarse *parvenu* from the Little Pittsburgh and gave its support to Augusta, who didn't hold at all with the high life her once poor husband now was leading.

There was a callous divorce, and Tabor married his Baby Doe in the Willard Hotel in Washington with President Chester A. Arthur among those present. The bride wore a seventy-five-hundred-dollar gown and a ninety-thousand-dollar diamond necklace, but the Colorado delegation in Washington snubbed the wedding. Denver never accepted the alliance. The Republican party, though it enjoyed his lavish contributions, withheld further political honors from Tabor. The silver king had bought his election to a term as lieutenant governor in 1878, and in 1883 when President Arthur appointed Senator Henry M. Teller Secretary of the Interior, Tabor was presented with the thirty-day remainder of Teller's term as a pat on the head for his campaign-fund generosity.¹

The appointment caused criticism, but the *News* argued candidly (from the Democratic side of the fence and comfortably uninvolved): "There are twenty-six men in the United States Senate because they are millionaires. Why should Tabor be barred on account of his millions?"

The Tabor story ends in pathos. He lost everything except the Matchless mine in the panic of 1893 when the price of silver dropped below production costs. His fall was as abrupt as his rise had been. Suddenly he was poor again, and an old man. Friends obtained his appointment

¹R. G. Dill, *The Political Campaigns of Colorado* (Denver, 1895), pp. 29ff. and 62ff.

as Denver postmaster to spare him from his three-dollar-a-day job wheeling slag in a Leadville smelter. He died in 1899, and his last words to his still young and pretty wife were: "Hold onto the Matchless." Baby Doe accepted the charge. She moved into the shaft house of the Matchless, long since water-filled and derelict. She died there in 1935, starved and frozen. Her feet were wrapped in gunny sacks.

On the curtain of the Tabor Grand Opera House there had been painted, in the fashion of the day, a scene of decadent and noble Old World ruins. Beneath the picture are two lines from Charles Kingsley's poem "Old and New":

So fleet the works of men, back to the earth again;
Ancient and holy things fade like a dream.

The words were of Tabor's own selection. Canon Kingsley had visited Colorado in 1874 and for a time occupied the pulpit of Grace Episcopal Church in Colorado Springs. Tabor heard one of his sermons, met the visiting English cleric, and was presented with a thin volume of his poems. Years later, when the opera house was being finished, Tabor designated the soothsaying two lines: "I want these on the curtain."

The motion picture *Silver Dollar* based on Tabor's rise and fall has him die brokenhearted beneath the Kingsley lines on the stage of the deserted opera house. Actually he died of a ruptured appendix in a cheap Denver rooming house. The legend-inspiring Tabor story also has been told in the folk opera, *The Ballad of Baby Doe*, by Douglas Moore and John LaTouche, presented originally with a Metropolitan cast at the 1956 Opera Festival in Central City, where Tabor met Baby Doe, then to critical acclaim on Broadway and, more recently, at the Brussels International Exposition.

But the Tabor story was only one of many in Denver of the 1880s, more glamorous than most perhaps, and if in its nature outdid art in melodrama there were dozens of other men who also rode an incomparable boom to insuperable heights. Few rose so fast or plunged so sharply, but the Midas-men and their ladies set the pace, and they turned a town into a city. Some of the other mining and smelting kings of the era included Byers' old friend, David H. Moffat, Jr., Nathaniel P. Hill, Ed Wolcott, Tom Bowen, James B. Grant, J. J. Brown, and John F. Campion.

Nor was Leadville the only camp which rained riches on Denver. Just west over the mountains from Tabor's town was Aspen with the Smuggler, the Mollie Gibson, the Midnight, and the Tam-O-Shanter, all producing ore faster than the pack trains of jacks or the narrow-gauge railroads could haul it away. From Aspen would come the "world's biggest" silver nugget—1840 pounds and 93 per cent pure. Ore and bullion also poured in from the San Juans, Ouray, Telluride, Silverton,

and Durango; from the upper reaches of Clear Creek Valley, Georgetown, and Silver Plume; from Nederland and Caribou in the high country west of Boulder.

Along with silver, one of the products of boom-time Leadville was John Arkins. Arkins went to the Cloud City as a printer, a compositor. He returned in slightly over a year to become one of the most capable and successful editor-publishers in the record of Denver journalism.

Arkins was born in Fayette County, Pennsylvania, and learned his trade in the office of the *Goodhue County Republican* at Red Wing, Minnesota, and on the *St. Louis Globe*. He served with the 5th Minnesota through the Civil War, lugging around a volume of the complete plays of Shakespeare while fellow soldiers were sifting gunpowder from their cartridges to make the belts lighter. Later Arkins said he always planned to write a book of his war experiences to be called *Three Years under a Musket: The Plain Story of a Private*. Unfortunately, he said, he had been mustered out a corporal and thus was shut out from authorship. Military titles were long-lived and frequently spurious in Arkins' day, and he was generally called "colonel." He jeered at the unearned title, which was given him by Colorado Governor James B. Grant and afterward by other governors who enjoyed decorative staffs.²

Arkins came west to Denver in 1873 and started as a printer for Stanley G. Fowler's *Sunday Mirror*. By 1878 he was foreman of the composing room of the *Tribune*. When word of the Leadville strikes reached town he and two fellow *Tribune* compositors, Carlyle Channing Davis and James M. Burnell, decided to try a paper of their own in the new camp. They borrowed every penny anyone would lend them, invested in a press, type, and other equipment, and sent their "office" up into the mountains by pack train. The three partners followed by stage and on January 29, 1879, a crowd waited in the muddy streets of Leadville from 3 until 9 P.M. for the maiden issue of their Leadville *Chronicle*, the camp's first daily paper. Arkins was the editor, "Cad" Davis gathered news as the leg man, and Burnell was business manager.

The *Chronicle* was a small silver mine in itself. By early the following year Arkins and Burnell had made so much and learned so much that they felt ready to buck the big time in Denver. Davis stayed on and subsequently changed the name of the paper to the *Herald-Democrat*. It is still being published under that name.

Arkins invested his share of the *Chronicle* earnings in a quarter interest in Loveland's *Rocky Mountain News* and took over editorial control on June 15, 1880. He had learned a lot in Leadville. Under Arkins the *News* matured, converted petty bickerings with the other

²Ellis Meredith, "Three Distinguished Figures of the Early Rocky Mountain News," *Colorado Magazine*, Vol. XXVII, No. 1 (Jan. 1950), pp. 34ff.

papers into a hammer-and-tongs style of aggressiveness, and solidly underscored its leadership.

Those who have written of Arkins speak in almost one voice of a ready wit, Irish charm and gallantry, a level and modest head in times of much foolish pretense, of flashing blue eyes and a shock of black curly hair. Surviving pictures show a handsome man.

Frank Hall, who was a contemporary and knew him, wrote:

That Mr. Arkins is a man of acute perceptions, of quick nervous energy and indomitable perseverance, is manifest to all who know him; that he is capable of producing excellent editorial matter when moved to it, is a part of his record; that he is a steadfast, helpful friend to his friends, is proverbial; that he is almost extravagantly generous, kind hearted, sympathetic and charitable, hundreds will attest; that he is always just or intensely scrupulous in politics, will not be claimed; that he is prone to lash his enemies with ships of scorpions, and exalt his adherents, is the natural outgrowth of an ardent, impulsive temperament [Hall was one of the leading opposition editorial writers, a Republican true blue, and earlier acting governor]. Strong, impetuous, bold and daring, he is fond of leading, directing, dominating, yet he is one of the most captivating and companionable of comrades in social intercourse, known and admired throughout the broad field of journalism from the Atlantic to the Pacific coast. His capabilities as a manager are seen in the phenomenal augmentation of value in the "News" property from \$150,000 in March, 1886, to nearly \$400,000 in 1890. As the successor of Mr. Byers in the "New Era," he became the potential force of the paper. From the poor and humble printer of 1879, he has risen to affluence, and to a conspicuous position among the strong influences of his time.³

Arkins was not long in making his strong influence felt when he joined Loveland as junior but managing partner in 1880. Within a few weeks the *News* was beginning to use page one for news matter instead of advertising. Headlines ceased to be labels or captions and began to tell the story, although in the style of the times they frequently were nearly as long as the articles they headed. Some of them ran thirteen "decks" or more in an elegant variety of types, caps, lower case, and italics. There was more experimenting with illustration. The paper expanded to ten pages, and soon a Monday edition was added to put publication on the seven-day basis which has continued since.

In November additional fonts of type were added to the cases, and Arkins brought in a new press. Richard M. Hoe had been working since 1845 to perfect a rotary, type-revolving press to replace the flat-bed models which had been in use ever since Gutenberg.⁴ Into the *News* Block came

³Frank Hall, *op. cit.*, Vol. III, pp. 138-39.

⁴Thomas MacKellar, *The American Printer* (Philadelphia, 1889), pp. 239-40.

one of Hoe's latest efforts: a double-cylinder press capable of pounding out 4500 impressions in an hour. The new Hoe probably succeeded the Cottrell & Babcock, although Frank Hall mentions that a single-cylinder Potter had been in use.⁵

On January 1, 1881, the *News* again reviewed its ancient history, making point of the perfect parallels in the annals and growth of newspaper and city. To the discomfort of its smaller competitors, the paper boasted that a payroll of seventy-five to a hundred persons now was required to meet demand for its superior product, and a staff of eight constantly alert editors and reporters bent to their literary labors on a we-never-sleep basis to supply Denver's needs for immediate intelligences of city, state, nation, and world. When the *Republican* bought a new press the *News* fired a hot shot about "a Bullock press in the basement and bullock brains in the editorial rooms."

With its own new Hoe press in position and operating, the *News* announced on November 23, 1880, that hereafter it would devote part of its Saturday editions to coverage of sporting news. The result was Denver's first sports page, and very partisan to the Denver Browns. The ball park was on Glency Street (originally Clancy, then Glancy and Glency, and now Tremont Place) between Fifteenth and Sixteenth streets, about where a skyscraper hotel is currently rising under auspices of William Zeckendorf, the New York real estate wonder boy Denver irreverently calls "Wild Bill."

The *News* staff of the day was headed by William F. Stapleton, one-time associate editor and later Washington correspondent for the St. Louis *Globe-Democrat*, who took over from Barret in 1882 or 1883. Other staff members included Richard Stapleton, William's brother, as city editor, John Shepherd, Charles M. Thompson, C. G. Noble, Ralph Bayard, J. Gordon Temple, Clint Snowden, Ben Zalinger, Mrs. C. M. Hampson, the *News*' first woman writer and possibly the first in the West. "Cap" Smith was back after a term as city clerk. W. R. Thomas returned to the staff in 1886. Will C. Ferril was city editor in 1887-88. Another city editor of the day was named Henry James and became a Hearst pillar in San Francisco.

James Burnell returned from a season of prospecting Battle Mountain and in September 1881 rejoined Arkins. He was given charge of the *News*' mechanical departments. Later he became business manager. One of his chief assistants was Frederick A. Meredith, appointed composing-room foreman in 1885, later proofreader and then managing editor. Meredith had worked beside Arkins at the cases of the *Goodhue County Republican* in Minnesota and subsequently on the *Globe* in St. Louis, and he is the man credited with the novel notion of Monday paydays for printers. When he became composing-room foreman of the *Globe*-

⁵Hall, op. cit., p. 138.

Democrat he found he was having difficulty getting the Sunday edition out on Saturday nights. Printers of the day were at least as bibulous as the modern variety, and the Saturday payday created lush patronage for adjacent saloons and five-thumbed typesetting in the composing room. Meredith announced that henceforth salaries would accrue on Mondays, a practice soon adopted throughout the newspaper publishing business. There was some grumbling among the *Globe* compositors, but none from *Globe* compositors' wives, who began getting first cut at the pay envelopes, and the Sunday edition had fewer "bulls" to annoy readers sensitive to typographical error. Meredith's daughter Ellis did a turn in the *News* proofroom and then became one of the most prominent of Denver's early newspaperwomen at the turn of the century. She went on to Washington as a correspondent and for many years was a prominent member of the capital press corps.

The *News* got out a rash of special editions in 1883 for the national encampment of the Grand Army of the Republic, a gathering which launched Denver's career as a convention city. The year 1883 also saw the first of a series of reprints of the first issue of the *News*, facsimile duplicates which ever since have been confused with authentic copies of the valuable maiden edition.

William B. Thom, a *News* compositor in the eighties, has left some reminiscent sketches of the period:

Those were the days of handset type, the installation of the linotype machine in the *News* office taking place several years later. The night force worked under gaslight. At midnight an old man whose name I regret to have forgotten brought to us in a pushcart an excellent luncheon; and such was his opinion of the integrity of the *News* printers that he took the word of each customer as to the amount due for food consumed. . . .

If a printer had a timepiece that he desired to pawn for a few dollars until the next pay day, he found accommodation at the watch-repairing shop of General Don Carlos Hasselton, next door to the *News* office, the rate of interest being, as I remember it, 25 percent per month. . . .⁶

Thom also ticked off a partial roster of his colleagues in the composing room: David W. Phillips, H. M. Green, C. H. Poole, Al C. Holt, O. L. Smith, Oscar L. Smallwood, W. H. Dedrick, John W. Hastie, Horace Haines, Oliver App, Henry Lees, James Young, Charles L. Merritt, Angelo Noce, Joseph Utter, Harry Buchanan, Willis A. Brainard, Charles F. Coffin, C. M. Kimball, Schuyler C. Killen, James Egan, Walter Shissler, James Salisbury, James Laughlin, James F. Boyne, George T. McFall, A. G. Anderson, David W. Phillips, Charles J. Spencer, Thomas

⁶William B. Thom, "As It Was in the '80s," *The Trail*, Vol. XX, No. 2 (July 1927), p. 3.

J. Morris, Horace Duff, Charles Boughton, Buff Corwin, and Andrew McNassor. Many of these men left descendants who still pursue the printing trades in Denver.

With more than fifty columns of type to set for each daily edition, the *News* required a proportionately large staff of printers. A handful of scribblers and editors could take care of what news coverage was necessary and defend institutional honor from the slings and arrows of Eugene Field.

The *News* as the dominant paper and Arkins as its editor became the puckish Field's targets-of-choice, though he didn't spare his contemporaries on the *Times* and *Republican*. Field already had something of a reputation as jackanapes and pungent paragrapher before he came to the *Denver Tribune*. He had been managing editor of the *Kansas City Times* for about a year in 1881 when O. H. Rothacker, *Tribune* editor, heard about him and made a journey east to lure him to Denver at the princely wage of forty dollars a week. In Denver he made legend as managing editor of the *Tribune*, although he stayed less than three years.

Anticipating Don Marquis, Field seized upon the lowly cockroach as a literary device. He did not develop a rationale by which an insect could write lower-case sentences on a typewriter, but he let it be known that he was the cockroach's friend and could speak the language.

In this fashion, Field asserted in his column, "The Nonpareil," he had learned that when Arkins became the chief of the *News* he had instituted such a penurious system of economy in regard to editorial-room paste that he starved out half a million dependent roaches. The report had come to him first hand. A poor, weak, emaciated cockroach had crept over to the *Tribune* from the *News* and had become Field's confidant. The bug now was sleek and fat and prosperous because in the *Tribune* office there was plenty of paste, as well as dirty towels and crumbs from the printers' lunch table, all evidence of "the superior management of the *Tribune* and the humane principles and generosity of its editors."

The "Colorado Roach" became a fixture. Field transcribed roach dialogues to needle Arkins and the *News*, and composed an essay entitled "To Improve the Literary Style of the Rocky Mountain News." No opportunity was lost to send a barbed dart at Arkins and the *News*, but they were not the only victims. Field also took on the rest of the local press, politicians of both stripes, and any likely businessman. One of his hoaxes helped elect a mayor, though that wasn't the intention, and the *Georgetown Courier* complained that Field finally had gone too far and "should be muzzled" when he made sport of Colorado's first congressman.

Judge James B. Belford was known as the "Red Rooster of the Rockies" because of his flaming hair and magnificently roseate beard. The Field report which roused the *Courier's* ire ran like this:

Congressman Belford has suddenly developed into a great social belle at Washington. Young ladies from every part of the republic are besieging him for strands of his beautiful red hair for their crazy quilts. One fair female from the Sunny South has completed a lovely quilt, the centerpiece of which is a most unique design composed entirely of hair from the Colorado congressman's head and beard. It represents a big juicy strawberry on a terracotta-colored plaque.

Kemp G. Cooper, once president of the News Printing Company, was reserved and aloof, a man of much chill dignity. By this time Cooper was managing director of the *Republican* and Field wrote: "Colonel K. G. Cooper went swimming in the hot water pool at Manitou last Sunday afternoon, and the place was used as a skating rink in the evening."

Grocer Wolfe Londoner was Field's good friend, in fact, as generous and perennial host to the Press Club, the good friend of every newspaperman in town. The *Tribune's* practical joke on him had unexpected consequences. Field inserted an advertisement in his paper to the effect that "in appreciation of our colored citizens, of whom he is a great admirer, Wolfe Londoner invites every member of that race in Denver to come to his store at 4 o'clock this afternoon, where each will receive a present of a fine watermelon." Londoner bought up three carloads of melons and was ready. The gratitude of a sizable bloc of voters did him no harm in his then current job as Republican campaign manager, and he went on to election as mayor.

The paragraphs which later were gathered into *The Tribune Primer*, a rare little book today much prized as a collector's item by persons who scorn Field's more famous children's verse, originally appeared in his day-to-day column during 1881 and 1882. Several of them deal with the Denver newspaper scene.

THE BOTTLE

This is a Bottle. What is in the Bottle? Very bad Whisky. It has been Sent to the Local Editor. He did not Buy it. If he had Bought it the Whisky would have been Poorer than it is. Little Children, you Must never Drink Bad Whisky.

THE CITY EDITOR

Here we Have a City Editor. He is Talking with the Foreman. He is saying he will have a Full Paper in the Morning. The Foreman is Smiling Sadly. Maybe he is Thinking the Paper will have a Full City Editor before Morning.

THE EDITOR'S HOME

Here is a Castle. It is the Home of an Editor. It has stained Glass windows and Mahogany stairways. In front of the Castle is a Park. Is

it not Sweet? The lady in the Park is the editor's wife. She wears a Costly robe of Velvet trimmed with Gold Lace, and there are Pearls and Rubies in her hair. The editor sits on the front Stoop smoking a Havana Cigar. His little Children are playing with diamond Marbles on the Tesselated Floor. The editor can afford to Live in Style. He gets Seventy-Five Dollars a month Wages.

THE BUSINESS MANAGER

Here we Have a Business Manager. He is Blowing about the Circulation of the Paper. He is Saying the Paper has Entered upon an Era of Unprecedented Prosperity. In a Minute he will Go up Stairs and Chide the Editor for leaving his Gas Burning while he Went out for a Drink of Water, and he will dock a Reporter Four Dollars because a Subscriber has Licked him and he cannot Work. Little Children, if we Believed Business Managers went to Heaven, we would Give up our Pew in Church.

THE REPORTER

What is That I see? That, my Child, is the News Interviewer, and he is now Interviewing a Man. But where is the Man? I can see no Man. The Man, my Child, is in his Mind.

The "local editor" of the *Tribune* in these days was E. D. Cowen, who became city editor of the *News* in 1902 following a stint in Europe in charge of the London and Paris editions of Bennett's *Herald*. In a memoir Cowen recalled the black walnut chair in Field's office. The chair had no bottom, but its seatlessness was concealed by a casually thrown newspaper. Purpose of the device was to discourage libel and damage suits, which, in view of Field's methods, must have been often threatened. Unwary callers would drop into the chair and plunge through to an undignified and awkward position. "When the victim chanced to be an irate complainant," Cowen wrote, "Field would make profuse apologies for the scant furnishings of the office, owing to the poverty of the publishing company, and tender his own chair as some small compensation for the mishap."⁷

There is good reason to believe that Field never took seriously the weepy nursery verse he began writing during his Denver years. It brought him a sort of fame, which he always discounted, and he himself described it as "popular but rotten." It must have shocked the thousands who dabbled at their eyes over "Little Boy Blue" and his faithful toy soldier when Field declared flatly in his foreword to the 1901 Boston edition of *The Complete Tribune Primer*: "I do not love all children."

One of his vernacular poems tells a newspaper story of Denver:

⁷Charles A. Murray and others, *Newspaper Career of E. D. Cowen* (Seattle, 1930), pp. 129-30.

Mr. Dana, of the New York Sun

Thar showed up out'n Denver in the spring uv '81
 A man who'd worked with Dana on the Noo York Sun.
 His name wuz Cantell Whoppers, 'nd he wuz a sight ter view
 Ez he walked inter the orfice 'nd inquired fer work to do.
 Thar warn't no places vacant then,—fer be it understood,
 That wuz the time when talent flourished at that altitood;
 But thar the stranger lingered, tellin' Raymond 'nd the rest
 Uv what perdigious wonders he could do when at his best,
 'Til finally he stated (quite by chance) that he hed done
 A heap uv work with Dana on the Noo York Sun.

Wall, that wuz quite another thing; we owned that ary cuss
 Who'd worked f'r Mr. Dana *must* be good enough fer *us*!
 And so we tuk the stranger's word 'nd nipped him while we could,
 For if *we didn't* take him we knew John Arkins *would*;
 And Cooper, too, wuz mouzin' round fer enterprise 'nd brains,
 Whenever them commodities blew in across the plains.
 At any rate we nailed him, which made ol' Cooper swear
 And Arkins tear out handfuls uv his copious curly hair;
 But we set back and cackled, 'nd hed a power uv fun
 With our man who'd worked with Dana on the Noo York Sun.

It made our eyes hang on our cheeks, 'nd lower jaws ter drop
 Ter hear that feller tellin' how ol' Dana run his shop;
 It seems that Dana wuz the biggest man you ever saw,—
 He lived on human bein's, 'nd preferred to eat 'em raw!
 If he hed democratic drugs ter take, before he took 'em,
 As good old allopathic laws prescribe, he allus shook 'em.
 The man that could set down 'nd write like Dany never grew,
 And the sum of human knowledge wuzn't half what Dana knew;
 The consequences appeared to be that nearly every one
 Concurred with Mr. Dana of the Noo York Sun.

This feller, Cantell Whoppers, never brought an item in,—
 He spent his time at Perrin's shakin' poker dice f'r gin.
 Whatever the assignment he wuz allus sure to shirk,
 He wuz very long on likker and all-fired short on work!
 If any other cuss had played the tricks he dared ter play,
 The daisies would be bloomin' over his remains to-day;
 But somehow folks respected him and stood him to the last,
 Considerin' his superior connections in the past.
 So, when he bilked at poker, not a sucker drew a gun
 On the man who'd worked with Dana on the Noo York Sun.

Wall, Dana came ter Denver in the fall uv '83,
 A very different party from the man we thought ter see,—
 A nice 'nd clean old gentleman, so dignerfied 'nd calm,
 You bet yer life he never did no human bein' harm!
 A certain hearty manner 'nd a fulness uv the vest
 Betokened that his sperrits 'nd his victuals wuz the best;

His face was so benevolent, his smile so sweet 'nd kind,
That they seemed to be the reflex uv an honest, healthy mind;
And God had set upon his head a crown uv silver hair
In promise uv the golden crown He meaneth him to wear.
So, uv us boys that met him out'n Denver, there was none
But fell in love with Dana uv the Noo York Sun.

But when he came to Denver in that fall uv '83,
His old friend Cantell Whoppers disappeared upon a spree;
The very thought uv seein' Dana worked upon him so
(They hadn't been together fer a year or two, you know),
That he borrowed all the stuff he could and started on a bat,
And, strange as it may seem, we didn't see him after that.
So, when ol' Dana hove in sight, we couldn't understand
Why he didn't seem to notice that his crony wa'n't on hand;
No casual allusion, not a question, no, not one,
For the man who'd "worked with Dana on the Noo York Sun!"

We broke it gently to him, but he didn't seem surprised,
Thar wuz no big burst uv passion as we fellers had surmised.
He said that Whoppers wuz a man he'd never heerd about,
But he mought have carried papers on a Jersey City route;
And then he recollected hearin' Mr. Laffan say
That he'd fired a man named Whoppers fur bein' drunk one day,
Which, with more likker *underneath* than money *in* his vest,
Had started on a freight train fur the great 'nd boundin' West,
But further information or statistics he had none
Uv the man who'd "worked with Dana on the Noo York Sun."

We dropped the matter quietly 'nd never made no fuss,—
When we get played for suckers, why, that's a horse on us!—
But every now 'nd then we Denver fellers have to laff
To hear some other paper boast uv havin' on its staff
A man who's "worked with Dana," 'nd then we fellers wink
And pull our hats down on our eyes 'nd set around 'nd think.
It seems like Dana couldn't be as smart as people say,
If he educates so many folks 'nd lets 'em get away;
And, as for us, in future we'll be very apt to shun
The man who "worked with Dana on the Noo York Sun."⁸

Arkins may have failed to bag the *Sun* man for the *News*, but he picked up some equally picaresque characters during the period. One of them, Ralph Bayard, came west out of New York with a reputation as a "chain-lightning man." Bayard gave the *News* a brief sample of his rapidity, turned around and went back to New York, and made a fortune as a bookmaker, withdrawing to genteel retirement during one of Tammany's reform waves.

The *News* chief, a diligent reader of exchanges, watched with interest

⁸Eugene Field, *A Little Book of Western Verse* (New York, 1895), pp. 96-102.

how the big-city papers in New York handled these periodic outbursts of civic morality. He observed that, quite aside from certain positive results in the way of municipal elevation, newspaper crusades against sin and corruption were popular with subscribers and led to increases in circulation. If it worked in New York it ought to work in Denver, which had at least its fair share of gaudy wrongdoing. So Arkins, although not notably a pecksniff, opened up on rampant vice in his prosperous and booming little city.

The saloons, many of which had side entrances for the ladies and secluded "private dining rooms" with horsehair sofas, ran seven days a week. Some of them threw away the key ceremonially at the grand opening and never closed their doors, day or night. The *News* began a campaign for a Sunday closing law. Arkins told his staff: "Any man that can't go from midnight Saturday night to six Monday morning can take a bottle home, or maybe wake up to the fact that he needs a spell without the Demon Rum. Anyhow, it's good stuff to make talk and bring in subscribers. If we succeed in getting a Sunday closing ordinance it's a victory for the paper and if we don't—well, I had three years losing battles now and then, but we won the war."⁹

The crusade made no particular dent on Denver's hard-drinking habits, and a Sunday blue law did not come until many years later, but the clergy applauded as a man, and one temperance meeting filled the Tabor Opera House to the gold-leaf rafters. As Arkins had predicted, the campaign made talk, was popular, and boosted circulation. Strangely enough, it was even popular with the bartenders, who thought it might be nice to have a day off once in a while.

Denver still was a wide-open town on gambling. Three-card monte had been banned early on the reasonable grounds that it was sleight of hand, not gambling; but the rest of the games flourished. There were numerous gaming parlors and variety halls in which a happy sucker could have his choice, or a mixture, of twenty-one, entertainment, liquor, and feminine companionship. In one of the popular resorts "Big Ed" Chase, later the city's political boss, sat on a high stool and observed all with a cold eye. Across his lap he held a shotgun to enforce decorum and discourage protests from poor losers about fast shuffles or wallets which disappeared from pants pockets in upstairs dressing rooms while the pants were temporarily unoccupied.

Another palace of chance was owned by one Jefferson Randolph ("Soapy") Smith, who earned his nickname (and the money to open his lavish graduate school for unconvinced dreamers) by operating on Leadville and Denver streets a pitch which employed a variation on the shell game. Forbes Parkhill, author of the definitive work on Denver's scarlet times, tells how it went:

⁹Ellis Meredith, *op. cit.*, pp. 41-42.

"Use this soap and wash your sins away!" twenty-eight-year-old Soapy would call, spilling a handful of loose banknotes beside the pile of soap. "Cleanliness is next to godliness, but the feel of good, crisp greenbacks in the pocket is paradise itself. Step up, friends, and watch me closely."

He would then offer to sell those interested in cleanliness alone a soap cube for twenty-five cents. As this was some five times the market price, there would be few takers. So he would hold up a hundred-dollar bill from the pile before him.

"But if you want to take a chance on winning one of these little green papers with the big numbers on them, I'll sell you a wrapped bar at the ridiculous price of five dollars."

The watchers saw him apparently twist the hundred-dollar bill around a cube of soap and then wrap it in a square of blue paper, tossing it carelessly alongside the unwrapped pile. Swiftly his dextrous fingers would wrap additional cubes, apparently enclosing one-, ten-, or twenty-dollar bills with each.

Someone would step up, pay his five dollars, and carefully select a wrapped cube. Unwrapping it, he would shout gleefully as he displayed the hundred-dollar bill he found inside. The first buyer was, of course, Doc Baggs or another capper.

Eagerly the suckers would swarm in to take advantage of this get-rich-quick offer. But surprisingly they would find no banknotes wrapped with their soap. When business slackened off then another capper "found" a hundred-dollar bill.¹⁰

"Soapy" did well, but as time went on bunco games and gambling became nominally illegal. Every so often the gamblers would be haled into court to explain their suddenly discovered flaunting of Denver's decency and to pay wrist-slap fines. So when the prospering "Soapy" prepared to open a legitimate gambling house he decided he required a dodge which would take the heat off. He employed a lawyer to help him think one up, and counsel came up with an idea. When "Soapy's" elaborate and luxurious Tivoli Club opened there was a large sign, *Caveat Emptor*, over the entrance.¹¹

It was in character. Hauled in during one of the recurrent cleanups, "Soapy" blandly explained that the Tivoli was an educational institution and that he operated a cure for the soul-destroying gambling habit. The press called him "the hayseed-educator of 17th Street."

"I am conducting a fair, legitimate business," "Soapy" told the *News* reporter. "My mission is to skin suckers. I defy the newspapers to put their hands on a single man I ever beat that was not financially able to stand it.

"I am emotionally insane. When I see anyone looking in a jewelry

¹⁰Forbes Parkhill, *The Wildest of the West* (New York, 1951), pp. 87-88.

¹¹William Ross Collier and Edwin Victor Westrate, *The Reign of Soapy Smith* (New York, 1935), p. 139.

store window thinking how they would like to get away with the diamonds, an irresistible desire comes over me to skin them. I don't drink, smoke, chew, or cheat poor people. I pay my debts."

"Soapy" also carried a pistol, and he used it on John Arkins. The *News* participated enthusiastically in, if it did not inspire, several of the anti-gambling drives. At one point the paper became so tiresomely specific on the matter that it was more than a libeled humanist and educator could bear. "Soapy" waylaid Arkins in the street one day and pistol-whipped him to the sidewalk. The *News* editor carried a scar for the rest of his days, and normally smooth and mild-mannered "Soapy" regretted his violence immediately. He sent Arkins a handsome easy chair for his office the next day. Arkins sent it back.¹²

"Soapy" also threatened Loveland, warning that he would kill the *News* owner on sight. Loveland for a time had to employ a bodyguard, F. D. (Bill) Weeks, later one of the West's most prominent metallurgists.¹³

The *News*' campaignings against gambling were, again, popular with the "better element" but foredoomed. In an era when the corner newsboy was taking a flier in silver-mine stocks and skyrocketing Denver real estate, no one could work up much real indignation against penny-ante stuff across green baize. Anyway, most of the natives knew enough to stay away from the luck emporiums; they were for tourists, tinhorns, and the incorrigibly hopeful.

Another of the *News*' moral-uplift projects also came to nought in the enervating climate of public unconcern. Denver in the eighties and nineties had a tenderloin second only to San Francisco's Barbary Coast or New Orleans' Storyville. The cribs and sumptuous parlor houses centered on Holladay Street, and the section became so notorious that the heirs of Ben Holladay, the stagecoach king for whom the thoroughfare had been named, petitioned City Council for relief from their shame. The street is now called Market.

The *News* alternately professed shock over the scandalous things that happened on "the Row" and chuckled archly in print with the rest of the town over the racy doings. Commercial love had progressed a long way from the crude "hog ranches" of the pioneer days. Some of the pleasure palaces were the *dernier cri* in luxury. Appointments were voluptuous, the merchandise handsome, and the madams insisted on a level of deportment which would have done credit to a countess' tea party. Loud, obscene, or profane language was strictly prohibited, and one resort entertained its clientele with Beethoven symphonies on the gramophone.

Secretly Denver was rather proud of her wickedness, and none of the periodic surges of moral redemption got much beyond fuss and feathers.

¹²Letter from W. M. Arkins, a nephew, to the author, Aug. 5, 1952.

¹³Letter from F. P. Loveland, a grandson, to the author, Mar. 10, 1958.

On one occasion the City Council decreed that each "public woman" would have to wear a yellow ribbon on her arm to designate her profession and distinguish her from chaste wives and daughters, who often were less well dressed. The *filles de joie* blossomed out in yellow gowns, saffron parasols, and gold slippers, paraded the streets, and sashayed into restaurants and the opera house. The unhappy aldermen repealed the ordinance. The *News* for August 21, 1880, reported that the Council had been unable to hold its session for lack of a quorum. Most of the councilmen were attending a ball arranged for the opening of "a newer and fashionable den of prostitution on Holladay Street."

When Belle Jones, Daisy Smith, and Annie Griffin were overtaken with youthful high spirits and danced birthday-nude at Nineteenth and Larimer streets, they of course were detained by police and fined. The charge was "naughty capers."

For the benefit of tourists and visiting firemen a directory of the city's illicit charms, the Denver Red Book, was published and freely distributed. The edition for 1892 carried the subtitle: "A Reliable Directory of the Pleasure Resorts of Denver." Blanche Brown advertised that she had "lots of boarders" who offered "all the comforts of home." Belle Birnard's notice urged male visitors to make her establishment a home away from home: "Strangers Cordially Welcomed." She had "14 Rooms, 5 Parlors" and "12 Boarders" along with "Music and Dance Halls" and "Choice Wines, Liquors and Cigars." Prospective patrons were assured that all was "Strictly First-Class in Every Respect." The card of Minnie A. Hall boasted of thirty rooms, twenty boarders, and five lounges, including the "Mikado Parlor."

On April 16, 1883, the *News* interrupted a routine report on a meeting of the board of aldermen to interject:

The clerk read a petition from one Mattie Silks requesting the change of a liquor license. He began, "A petition from Mattie Silks——" Alderman Armstrong, who was busily employed fixing up some papers, raised his head when the name was read and exclaimed, "What?" Everybody laughed while the mayor pounded with his gavel and Alderman Armstrong bent to his work on the papers with an energy both surprising and praiseworthy. But he blushed.

Mattie was Denver's most famous madam, and she had a ne'er-do-well fancy man named Cort Thomson, a swaggering gambler (with Mattie's coin), a fleet foot racer, a former Quantrill guerrilla. But Mattie loved him, and she had proved it with a gun. She had thrown a party for the elite of the sporting world at the Denver Gardens, a pleasant outdoor variety theater on the west bank of the Platte River. The guest list included nearly every thimbligger, faro dealer, rounder, and rake in town, along with most of the frail sisterhood and their madams. Mattie

bought the champagne. As the evening wore on toward morning and the eastern sky was growing light Mattie decided that a rival chatelaine was paying entirely too much attention to her handsome Cort. Then and there she challenged Katie Fulton to a duel, pistols at thirty paces. One version of the affair says the ladies stripped to the waist for their encounter. Mattie chose Cort for her second, and Katie selected a gambler named Sam Thatcher. The thirty paces were stepped off in a grove of cottonwoods, and on the count of three the ladies turned and fired. Cort Thomson went down, a bullet through the back of his neck. Mattie flung herself beside him and stanching the flesh wound with her lace handkerchief. There were some who said the jealous Katie had deliberately shot at Cort. Others blamed the champagne.

The *News* of August 26, 1877, was irate. A scandalous going on. An affront to civic dignity. Couldn't the authorities prevent such wild and sybaritic revels?

A few years later, in 1882, the doves of Holladay Street, who perhaps hadn't got the word, were as excited as everyone else in Denver about the forthcoming visit of Oscar Wilde. The American tour of the English aesthete had been widely publicized. His affection for Japanese paper fans, sunflowers, and lilies had been well established through reports in the papers of interviews in other cities. The girls in the cribs and parlor houses chattered gaily about sunflowers and silk knee breeches, and at the *maison* of Rosa Lovejoy Japanese fans were added to the standard equipment of enticement. Wilde's jargon was on every boarder's lips: things were just "too too" or "too utterly utter."¹³

On April 5, a few days before Wilde's arrival, Minnie Clifford and Emma Nelson sallied forth in the full regalia of aestheticism. Minnie, the *News* said, had "placed upon her hat, between the port gangway and the rudder chains, an immense sunflower fully a foot in diameter." Emma was decorated with an "immense lily." The girls encountered Officer James Connor on his beat and minced up to him with praise for his "too, too divine" new helmet. "I know what makes the wildcat wild, but who makes Oscar?" the lusty Minnie chortled to the intense delight of onlookers. Officer Connor, being an Irishman and faithful to his duty, was a troubled man. He appealed to Police Chief James J. Lomery for advice on how to proceed. The chief suggested that he book the girls for "meretricious display." Then he issued an order calling for the arrest of any notorious woman unusually attired.

Next day the *Tribune* urged Wilde to "hurry up and deliver your disciples from the oppression of the tyrant", and the *News* headline read: "Arrested for Estheticism." An anonymous poet in the *News* of April 9 celebrated the case in verse entitled "Ascerbated Esthetics" which wound up:

¹³Lloyd Lewis and Henry Justin Smith, "Oscar Wilde in Denver," *Harper's*, Vol. 171 (Nov. 1935), p. 48.

Oh, Oscar! Oh, Oscar!
Pray take a hoss car
And hasten to aid us;
Aid or we're busted.
No daffydowndilly
No sunflower or lily
In Denver is trusted!

A few days later the *News* again hailed Wilde with poesy:

We hail thee as the most successful humbug of the age,
If thou dost boast of being too
We will produce Charles Baggs, M.D.,
Who is as too as thou art, and a durned sight tooter.

The reference is to "Doc" Baggs, sometime capper for "Soapy" Smith and a notorious local con artist who at one point operated the Commercial Bank of Denver with facilities which included a huge and impressive safe. Public confidence in the Commercial Bank was shaken when it was disclosed that the safe could be folded up to fit into a suitcase. The *News* at this point was on Chief Lomery's back for not arresting Baggs, and the paper said that in view of the civic commotion the chief planned to escort Wilde straight from the train to jail. "If the old vigilance committee were only in existence now," the item continued, "the reign of the aesthetic pestilence would be very brief."

Nonetheless the *News* and the *Republican* both dispatched reporters north to meet the Wilde train. The interviewers found him gracious and friendly, but critical of the country, "so brown, bare, and disconsolate." Wilde possessed, the *News* reporter observed, "a complexion . . . so clear and beautiful, that the maidens may well grow green with envy, for no balm or powder can give to their cheeks the peculiar beauty of the esthete's complexion."

On the eve of Wilde's arrival Gene Field announced solemnly in the *Tribune*:

It is said that Colonel Arkins will introduce Oscar Wilde to the Denver public tomorrow night. He will wear a breech-clout and a sunflower.

Wilde lectured that night to a good house in the Tabor Grand on "Interior and Exterior House Decoration", and the *News* said there was only slight "merry decorous laughter from the parquette." The customary fee had been raised from a dollar to a dollar and a half in recognition of the Colorado bonanzas, and the stage carpenters had provided a tasteful drawing-room set with a single lily on a round center table. Wilde entered "languidly and dreamily" and paused now and again

during his lecture to touch his lips daintily with a snowy handkerchief. He stopped at the Windsor, where a suite had been prepared for him papered in pink "with lily design and storks in the sunflowers."

The following day he took the narrow-gauge to Leadville for an appearance there. In his lectures when he returned to England, Wilde ignored his rude reception in Denver, but recorded his impressions of the Cloud City. Leadville, he told his countrymen, was

. . . the richest city in the world. It has also got the reputation of being the roughest, and every man carries a revolver. I was told that if I went there they would be sure to shoot me or my travelling manager [D'Oyly Carte]. I wrote and told them that nothing that they could do to my travelling manager would intimidate me. They are miners—men working in metals, so I lectured to them on the Ethics of Art. I read them passages from the autobiography of Benvenuto Cellini and they seemed much delighted. I was reproved by my hearers for not having brought him with me. I explained that he had been dead for some little time which elicited the enquiry, "Who shot him?" They afterwards took me to a dancing saloon where I saw the only rational method of art criticism I have ever come across. Over the piano was printed a notice:—

**Please do not Shoot the
PIANIST
He is doing His Best**

The mortality among pianists in that place is marvelous. Then they asked me to supper, and having accepted, I had to descend a mine in a rickety bucket in which it was impossible to be graceful. Having got into the heart of the mountain I had supper, the first course being whisky, the second whisky and the third whisky.

I went to the Theatre to lecture and I was informed that just before I went there two men had been seized for committing a murder, and in that theatre they had been brought on to the stage at eight o'clock in the evening, and then and there tried and executed before a crowded audience. But I found these miners very charming and not at all rough.¹⁴

The mine of the whiskey supper was H. A. W. Tabor's Matchless, and for the descent into its damp depths Wilde wore Tabor's own India-

¹⁴Oscar Wilde, *Impressions of America*, Stuart Mason, ed. (Sunderland, 1906), pp. 30-32.

rubber suit. Wilde said the suit kept him dry and warm but complained that it should have had a purple satin lining, storks embroidered on the flaps, and fern around the edges.¹⁵ If Leadville was somewhat less rugged than he had anticipated, it still was rough enough. A few days before Wilde's arrival Judge A. W. Stone—the jurist kidnaped in the railroad wars—had been cowhided through the streets by a local matron.

Two days later, on April 15, Denver was braced for the second coming of Oscar. Gene Field had been something of a disappointment to the town. He had not lived up to his reputation for practical jokes—and with an ideal butt in town, too. Instead Field had written generously and seriously in the *Tribune* about the visitor's literary fame and artistic philosophies. He had sheathed the pen which sometimes nicked sharply in his theatrical reviews. One of them had consisted of three lines of type: "The Rev. George W. Miln played 'Hamlet' at the Opera House last night. He played it until 11 o'clock." On another occasion he had observed that an actor "played the king as though he expected someone else to play the ace." But Wilde had received no such treatment from Field.

The *Tribune* wit and jokester was waiting at the station for the Leadville train on the night of April 15. His boss, O. H. Rothacker, was standing by with an elegant team and an English drag. He planned to take Wilde on a ride about the city before his evening lecture, and later there would be a select party at the Denver Club. But a late snowstorm delayed the train, and the welcoming committee recessed to a saloon.

Wilde's advance man, Charles E. Locke, suggested that someone be fixed up to represent his Irish poet in order not to disappoint the waiting throngs. Field jumped at the opportunity. He was fitted out in a fur-trimmed overcoat, a long-haired wig, and a wide-brimmed hat. Then the party drove through the streets, Field with his limp head resting on one hand and a book in the other. He wore a "pathetic and dreamy expression" and fluttered his fingertips at the crowds. As they passed one corner a newsboy shouted, "Shoot Oscar!"

The tallyho proceeded to the *Tribune* office, where the dignified business manager, Fred J. V. Skiff, later director of the Field Museum in Chicago, was waiting at the door. Skiff recognized Field and shied a broom at him.

The hoax was exposed in the *Republican* two days later. Field, that paper felt, had "played it pretty low-down on the people of Denver." The dead-pan Field shot right back in that afternoon's *Tribune*:

The *Republican* is getting more and more unreliable every day. Its statement that gentlemen connected with the *Tribune* imposed a bogus Oscar Wilde upon the people of Denver last Saturday afternoon is not

¹⁵Lloyd Lewis and Henry Justin Smith, *Oscar Wilde Discovers America 1882* (New York, 1936), p. 316.

only a gross misrepresentation of fact but an unprofessional snub of Mr. W. H. Stapleton of the *News*, who perpetrated the practical joke. Mr. Stapleton will probably take up the cudgel in his own behalf through the columns of the *News* this morning.

The innocent managing editor of the *News* didn't. He had eccentrics on his own staff to deal with. One of them was Orth Stein. He had recently joined the staff after a period as city editor of the *Chronicle* in Leadville. The quality of his japeries is indicated by the "exclusives" he invented about the finding of a derelict battleship on top of Battle Mountain and an amphibious monster in Twin Lakes. He also had decided, on his way from the railway station to the *Chronicle* office, that all Leadville doctors were quacks. So he published an exposé which resulted in a legislative investigation.

In honor of Wilde's visit Stein had composed for the *News* a parting shot:

Long and thin is the form within
That rests in the easy chair
And he counts his pelf, while high on the shelf
Is a wig of flowing hair.
No cut-off pants adorn his leg,
But hang on the wall on a humble peg.

A dressing gown warm encircles his form,
He holds a pipe in his hand;
Softly, says he, "What fools they be,
In this semi-civilized land.
They think that I live on sunflower seed—
An Irish stew is more what I need."

Wilde escaped Denver on the ten-thirty train following his final lecture. An hour later Orth Stein was felled at Fifteenth and Blake streets by a party unknown wearing brass knucks. The attack bore no relation either to his verse or to Wilde's visit, but Officer Jim Connor again was on the scene. In fact, Stein complained to Chief Lomery, Officer Connor had stood by and let the assailant beat him up. Conner replied that he didn't intend to get mixed up in any family quarrels. Stein, the patrolman said, was out with a lady trapeze performer from the Tivoli Theater and had been waylaid by her husband.

The *News* reporter apparently had a peculiar talent for getting himself in trouble. When he died later in New Orleans he was wanted in several states for forgery, and he had been the victim in another brawl with apparent tragic results before he left Denver. E. D. Cowen wrote of him:

. . . He disappeared in a Southern prison for a while only to re-appear in an Alabama shooting scrape, after which he moved to

Louisiana. It may be questioned whether Stein was sane during the years after he had been set upon by some unknown person and beaten almost to death with a bludgeon one night in 1883 near the old Palace Theatre. Until that assault occurred, both at Leadville and Denver, he seemed to have as keen moral perceptions as anyone. Shortly afterward he assassinated a variety theatre keeper named Fredericks at Kansas City, in a petty quarrel over a Ganymede of the boxes. From the penalty for this crime, he was rescued by his mother, who spent a small fortune in his deliverance. His father had died from a broken heart at the disgrace in which the son had involved the family. When liberated, Stein embarked on an adventurer's career, which was punctuated at intervals by brilliant work in the Eastern cities. Confidence operations of a peculiarly daring and unscrupulous nature finally outlawed him in the North.¹⁶

Denver journalism calmed down somewhat with the departure in 1883 of Stein and Eugene Field. Field's health had broken, and after a slow recovery during which he was tormented with melancholia he moved on the *Daily News* in Chicago.¹⁷ His popularity as a children's poet began shortly thereafter. The small frame house he occupied in Denver was moved many years later to Washington Park, where it now is used as the Eugene Field Branch of the Denver Public Library. In the same park there is a fountain and statue of his "Wynken, Blynken and Nod," who sailed off in a wooden shoe.

Another Denver newspaperman of the late eighties lived a forlorn and blighted life, haunted by the ghosts of legions of suffering boys. He was the original Little Lord Fauntleroy. His name was Henry Burnett, and his novelist mother, Frances Eliza Hodgson Burnett, was the author of *Little Lord Fauntleroy*, a precious book which sold more than a half million copies and then, to compound the offense, was dramatized. Mrs. Burnett let it be known that she had used her son as model for the proper little priss in curls and lace collar who was dearly beloved by all late nineteenth-century mothers and detested by their sons. Henry came to Denver fleeing his reputation and joined the staff of the *Republican*. It is said that he was a good reporter and handy with his fists, which he was forced to employ when taunts became unbearable. He covered "the lowers"—the hotel beat along Larimer Street and on down to the railroad station—and did the best he could. But he had to keep on fighting, and the label stuck. Henry held out for about a year and then wearily shouldered his burden and trudged off into the mists, a pathetic and doomed figure.¹⁸

¹⁶Murray, op. cit., p. 29.

¹⁷For an account of Field's Denver years see Slason Thompson, *Eugene Field: A Study in Heredity and Contradictions* (New York, 1901), Vol. I, pp. 143ff.

¹⁸*Rocky Mountain News*, Dec. 28, 1950.

The talent-laden *Tribune* of Rothacker, Skiff, Cowen, and Field did not long survive the prankster's going. In 1884 it was near collapse and was merged with Kemp Cooper's *Republican*, the morning rival of the *News*, which had now built itself up to a 2200 circulation as the property of Senator Hill. For a time the paper was published as the *Tribune-Republican*, but the joint title was dropped January 1, 1887.

On March 2 of the previous year there had been another change in the ownership of the *News*. Arkins with his brother Maurice and James Burnell formed a partnership and bought out the three-quarter interest still held by W. A. H. Loveland.

Toward the end of the partnership there were strained relationships. The junior partner, Arkins, began to dip into the cash drawer for small sums without checking with the firm's treasurer and cashier, F. W. Loveland, the senior partner's son. Arkins kept promising to repay the till but never got around to it. The younger Loveland took the matter into court on a garnishment and got an okay from his father to change the combination on the safe.

Arkins walked in while the cashier was jiggling the combination, grabbed his personal box out of the safe, and checked its contents insultingly. Then he picked up part of the notes on the new combination and one of the nuts which held the locking machinery together. The Lovelands, father and son, sent for a locksmith, but Arkins, who had been drinking, pulled a gun. Loveland faced him down, and a few days later the unpleasanties were ended by sale of the *News*.¹⁹

The pioneer Democrat withdrew to devote himself to his mining, railroad, and other business ventures. Along with hundreds of other mining kings, he was caught in the panic of '93 and lost most of his sizable fortune. He held onto his big house in suburban Lakewood, and he died there December 17, 1894, a much-honored pioneer and state builder. His family could remember that among his many activities and distinctions he was one of the founders of Colorado School of Mines, a technical school in Golden which earned a world-wide reputation and draws students of engineering, metallurgy, geology, and related fields from scores of far lands.

The Arkins brothers and Burnell had scarcely settled into their ownership before bad luck hit. On the morning of July 6, 1886, the Denver Academy of Music next door to the *News* Block burned down in a \$125,000 fire. The blaze spread to the *News* building to damage office and pressroom. When the smoke had cleared the paper had suffered a \$35,000 loss, more than Loveland had paid for the entire establishment. The weekly *Colorado Topics* at Hyde, Weld County, boasted for the *News* that "with an enterprise that is one of the prominent characteristics

¹⁹Diary of F. W. Loveland, Jan. 23 to Mar. 2, 1886, courtesy of his son, F. P. Loveland of Colorado Springs.

of all Western newspapers in general and of Colorado in particular, they never missed an issue."

Arkins had to go shopping for more new presses, however. On October 3 the paper was printed from a Hoe web "presto-perfecting" press, the first *News* press to employ a continuous roll of paper instead of hand-fed sheets. Capacity: a fabulous 10,000 newspapers an hour, cut, folded, and ready for delivery. With the new press, the stereotyping process—printing by page-size plates cast in a mold from the type—came to Denver for the first time. The *News*, of course, was not bashful in announcing its enterprise.

By 1889 illustrations were becoming more common. Half-tone photo-engraving was added to the facilities in 1898, permitting the reproduction of pictures without first tracing or hand-engraving them. A daily cartoon became a feature in 1891, and one of the early staff cartoonists was Wilbur Steele, nephew of Fred Meredith.

Another major technical advance came on February 24, 1890—a leased wire for telegraphic news. The paper announced: "This morning *The News* takes another great stride in advance of its contemporaries. The columns of telegraphic news from every part of the earth which appear in this paper this morning were received direct in this office over four wires, which were put in place on Saturday, and are handled by *The News* operators." The wires were leased from Western Union, which had stretched an independent press wire between Kansas City and Denver. Up to this time the *News* had been receiving a condensed report of about 29,000 words of wire news weekly. Now it could receive that much and more in a single day. Stagecoach mail, Pony Express, the first telegraphic dispatches received in Denver, and now its own leased wire to meet the insatiable news hungers of a booming town. The *News* crowded in triumph.

In the midst of these improvements and advances the paper found it was outgrowing the venerable, fire-singed News Block on Larimer Street. On December 27, 1887, it moved uptown to rented quarters in the Patterson & Thomas Block at Seventeenth and Curtis streets. The red sandstone building, towering five stories in the center of the growing financial center of the city, later was renamed the Quincy. Recently it was wrecked to make way for a parking lot.

The move and continued progress again required new printing equipment. This time it was two Goss perfecting presses. They were installed in 1888 and raised production speed to 12,000 copies an hour.

It was an Arkins family paper through and through in these days. John was the boss, Edwin G. dramatic editor, Frank J. telegraph editor and Tom proofreader, but Maurice, partner with John and Jim Burnell in the firm, died in 1887. His death led soon to the introduction of a new blood line into the *News* genealogy.

An aggressive, and prospering Democratic attorney—one of the

owners of the building in which the paper was being published—bought up for a never disclosed price on August 9, 1890, Maurice Arkins' one-third interest. Tom Patterson, as Colorado Territory's non-voting delegate to Congress, had been the man who did the log-rolling which won statehood. Later he would be a United States senator. With Loveland, he was one of Colorado's most forceful and powerful Democratic leaders. There was no middle ground so far as Tom Patterson was concerned. One loved or hated or feared him. And he was a fighter who could sass the Supreme Court to its face.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

Tom Patterson Takes Over

THOMAS MACDONALD PATTERSON was a Black Irishman, a Presbyterian from County Carlow, and he was Colorado's first successful Democrat. A contemporary who knew him well described him as "a reserved, rather silent personage" and insisted that "personage" was the right word. His dignity was accompanied, as often seems to be the case, by a somewhat underdeveloped sense of humor. He was never "one of the boys." But he was a persuasive orator, a bold and driving politician, and a dramatic courtroom lawyer who never would admit defeat.

A long-time political enemy, Judge Belford the Red Rooster, once scolded a critic: "But for Tom Patterson, folks like you and me couldn't live in this city. He is the one man who has put up a continuous fight for the rights of common people, and kept it up, year after year. You can be thankful that he is a fighting man with the courage of his convictions."

Patterson was born November 4, 1840. His family emigrated to America when he was nine, and he was reared on Long Island and in Crawfordsville, Indiana, where he learned the printer's trade on the *Review*. After a hitch in the Union Army under Colonel Lew Wallace of the 11th Indiana Volunteers, he educated himself as a lawyer. In 1872, about the time his colonel was writing *Ben Hur*, young Patterson struck out for the West to hang up his shingle. He lit in Denver in December and almost simultaneously became a candidate.

Eighteen months after he arrived he was elected city attorney. Three months later he was the Democratic candidate for territorial delegate to Congress, and he went in with a smart majority. It was the first major post Colorado had given a Democrat.¹

In Washington, though hampered by the non-voting status of a territorial delegate, Patterson won passage of several key pieces of legislation paving the way for transition to statehood. Edward Keating, Patterson's employee as newspaperman and one of his successors as congressman, had from his mentor a firsthand account of the infighting

¹Biographical data may be found in Byers, "History of Colorado," pp. 213-16; Smiley, *Semi-Centennial History of the State of Colorado*, Vol. II, pp. 1-3; Ferril, op. cit., pp. 110-11; Stone, op. cit., Vol. II, pp. 16-19; and F. Edward Little, "Thomas M. Patterson: The Game-Cock of the Colorado Courts," *Rocky Mountain Law Review*, Vol. XI, No. 3 (Apr. 1939), pp. 149ff.

which led to the enabling act for Colorado's admittance to the Union in March of 1875. Patterson teamed with Stephen B. Elkins, later a rich West Virginia coal operator but then Republican delegate from the territory of New Mexico. Elkins also was out after statehood for his territory, much older in terms of settlement than Colorado. Patterson worked the Democratic side of the House, Elkins the Republican, and together they pushed the two enabling bills to the floor for action.

But the "Southern Brigadiers" were beginning to return to Congress in force at this time and already had become decisive powers in both House and Senate. As the Colorado and New Mexico bills neared action Representative Julius Caesar Burrows of Michigan, a Union Army veteran, launched into an eloquent attack on the Southern Democrats, reopening all the old, nearly healed Civil War wounds, twisting the knife in them and waving the bloody shirt. The Republicans cheered lustily, and Elkins could not restrain his enthusiasm. He rushed down the aisle and was the first to shake Burrows' hand. The "Southern Brigadiers" raged. "Look at that damn Yankee from New Mexico," they told each other.

The Southerners held the balance of power, and they decided to kill both statehood bills. Patterson, who had remained conspicuously neutral in the flare-up over Burrows' speech, argued with them, promising that the new state of Colorado would give up its errant Republican habits and swing into the Democratic column. The Southerners were impressed by Patterson's deportment and words; they okayed his bill and killed Elkins'.

"So it was that Colorado came into the Union as the Centennial State on the hundredth anniversary of the Declaration of Independence," Keating says. "New Mexico remained on the outside for over 35 years—all because its hot-blooded young delegate could not refrain from shaking hands with a gentleman who knew how to wave the bloody shirt."

Patterson returned to Denver in triumph. But he couldn't deliver on his pledge to reform Colorado's politics. Judge Belford trounced him roundly when they stood against each other for election as Colorado's first United States representative, 1876-77. The state went Republican all the way, as usual, and cost Samuel Tilden the presidency. In the famous and heated contest which followed the election Rutherford B. Hayes went to the White House by the margin of one electoral vote—Colorado's.

After some shrewd legalistic maneuvering—and bungling by the Republicans, who permitted two elections to be held—Patterson unseated Belford in the next go-round and went back to Washington as Colorado's first Democratic congressman, 1877-79. Nearly a quarter century later Patterson paired his victory by winning election as the first Democratic senator from Colorado, 1901-7, although Henry M. Teller, a Republican, had been elected on a bipartisan ticket in 1896 in the blowup over silver coinage. Patterson was defeated for governor in 1888,

but his law partner and fellow Democrat, Charles S. Thomas, became both a governor and a senator.

Patterson remained in politics—partisan, non-partisan, municipal, and corporate—all his life, and the *News* became his most potent weapon. Its columns carried his lashing, often brilliant statements, and he threw the paper headlong into every fight.

The *News* had progressed mightily under Arkins. Circulation was booming. *Pettingill's Newspaper Directory* for 1877 says the paper then had 1920 daily and 1800 weekly subscribers. By 1891 the totals were up to 15,600 daily, 5500 weekly, and 23,800 Sunday, according to *Dauchey & Co.'s Newspaper Catalogue* for that year. When the Arkins-Burnell partnership took over from Loveland in 1886 the property had been valued at a hundred and fifty thousand dollars. Four years later, when Patterson moved in, it was worth nearly four hundred thousand dollars.²

In 1892, Patterson picked up, again for an undisclosed price, the one-third interest of James M. Burnell. The brief, early taste of printer's ink on the little Crawfordsville *Review* had left a permanent appetite. The lawyer-politico now was firmly in the newspaper business. He owned two thirds of the *News*, John Arkins the other third, and the silent partnership which started in 1890 now began to become vocal. Arkins remained in day-to-day management of the paper, but his health was failing.

In the summer of 1894 the "glamorous gladiator" took a leave from the paper and went to Excelsior Springs in Missouri to see if he could recapture his health. It was no good. He returned a pain-haunted skeleton, and died August 19. The funeral was an occasion of civic mourning. Hothouses and floral shops were swept clean of flowers for wreaths. Everyone in town recalled some personal instance of the Irish charm, generosity, and wit. Rev. Myron Reed in his sermon said: "When I came down the street this morning, I felt as if the world was mighty thinly populated." Newsboys and bootblacks remembered the Thanksgiving and Christmas dinners Arkins gave them each year. The colored janitor at the *News* told how the boss had sent him to Tortoni's for a chicken breast to feed a stray cur which had wandered into the office—"de boosum ob a chicken!"

One of Arkins' last acts was to stave off—probably with Patterson money in the background—an attempted Republican recapture of the paper. Years later William M. Arkins, nephew of the *News* editor, told Edwin A. Bemis, manager of the Colorado Press Association, how it happened:

I have forgotten the year, but it was when certain persons representing the Republican Party secured an option on the *Rocky Mountain News*

²Hall, op. cit., Vol. III, p. 139.

for \$400,000. The sum of \$10,000 was paid down and the option read that the balance had to be paid in cash.

The night the option was expiring I sat with my Uncle and A. M. Stevenson on the Stout Street side of the Albany Hotel bar room. A. M. Stevenson had a certified check for \$390,000 and wanted Uncle John to take it and close the deal. Just before the clock struck twelve, Stevenson asked Uncle John to take the check but he refused. He said he didn't know of an easier way of making \$10,000. As the clock struck twelve Uncle John said: "Well, I'll buy a drink." The option had expired because they had not lived up to the terms—cash. Stevenson told me some years later that he was of the opinion that T. M. Patterson had talked Col. Arkins out of selling. At that time, Col. Arkins had an option on the old *Chicago Times*.³

The certain persons were associates of Edward O. Wolcott, the Republican Tom Patterson eventually would succeed in the Senate. Wolcott was a wealthy lawyer and financier of New England origins, and he lived high. During his terms in Washington he was known as the ablest poker player, most compelling orator, and best-dressed man in the Senate. He wore striped trousers, a fawn waistcoat and, always, a boutonniere. In the \$100,000-a-night games at Chamberlin's Restaurant, Ed Wolcott, son of a clergyman, drew shrewdly and bet tough. On trips to New York he became one of the plungers at Richard Canfield's famous gambling establishment. Herbert Asbury in his book, *Sucker's Progress*, says Wolcott's special limit on faro at Canfield's was \$2000 on cases and \$4000 on doubles—only slightly under the \$2500 and \$5000 limits of John W. ("Bet-A-Million") Gates. Wolcott sometimes bucked the games at Canfield's for two days and nights at a sitting. Although he was representing Colorado, Wolcott lived so much of the time at the family home in Woodlawn that he became known as the "third senator from Massachusetts." He did build a big country home, Wolhurst, on the Platte south of Denver, and there he entertained his friends from the East on a manorial scale. (Wolhurst, after a recent career as a roadhouse gambling den, now is a private country club.) When Wolcott died, at Monte Carlo, he left behind a \$60,000 IOU at Canfield's. It was settled, a hundred cents on the dollar.

But Wolcott came a cropper in his brief fling in the direction of the newspaper game. He was up against a determined opponent who took his politics seriously, and he lost. Tom Patterson, although he became a wealthy man and died leaving a four-million-dollar estate, never was interested in the Senate as a rich man's club. His political and economic sympathies were always with the man in the street, and though he belonged to the archly exclusive Denver Club he was seen there only once. "Its snobbishness almost suffocated me." His personal life was one

³Edwin A. Bemis, "Journalism in Colorado," in LeRoy R. Hafen, *Colorado and Its People*, Vol. II, pp. 271-72.

of simplicity, thrift, and rigid routine. Work possessed him. A busy and growing criminal and mining law practice claimed his days, and he was at the *News* half the night. He never learned to enjoy the wealth which came to him.

When Arkins died his widow and son Edwin inherited his remaining third interest in the *News*. Then Edwin died, leaving Mrs. Arkins and Patterson as owners. Patterson bought up the widow's share, and the *News* became his personal property thenceforth to 1914. His son-in-law, Richard C. Campbell, was made business manager and acted for the publisher in his frequent absences on legal and political errands.

Patterson assumed control of the *News* as the nation was slipping into an economic trough. Colorado was hurting more than most areas. Its economy was based largely on the money metals, gold and silver, and the "sound money" men of Wall Street and Washington had turned their backs on "hard money"—the kind that clinked when you tossed it on the bar. Loveland's *News* had helped make silver a burning political issue in Colorado, and Patterson's *News* hammered the same anvil. Free coinage of silver was the cry in Colorado for more than twenty years, and until very recently a leading Denver department store, the Denver Dry Goods Company, urged its customers to accept silver dollars in change "to help the mining industry."

The price of silver had dropped to a 20-to-1 ratio with gold when Congress voted the Sherman Silver Purchase Act of 1890. By this act the treasury was required to purchase four and a half million ounces of silver monthly at the prevailing prices. The buying helped a little in Western mining states, but it further weakened the nation's precarious gold reserves. Moreover the West wanted free and unlimited coinage of silver.

Grover Cleveland won the 1888 election at the polls only to lose it in the electoral college to Benjamin Harrison. As the Democratic National Convention of 1892 approached it became obvious that Cleveland would be the choice again. And Cleveland had declared in 1891 that the Sherman Act was a "dangerous and reckless experiment in free, unlimited and independent coinage." Colorado fumed and fulminated.

In June 1892, Tom Patterson packed his bags to go to the convention in Chicago on a trip he knew was a hopeless one. He took along his star woman reporter, Ellis Meredith, to cover the proceedings for the *News*. The convention met in the Wigwam, where Lincoln had been nominated in 1860, and the roof of the old building leaked dismal rain on the delegates. Patterson delivered an hour-long minority report on the monetary plank in his party's platform, and then he walked out of the convention taking a queue of Western Democrats with him. As expected, the anti-silver plank was adopted and Cleveland nominated. Ellis Meredith wrote her story for the *News* and handed it to the telegraph operator.

In the morning she and her boss read in the Chicago press that "Patterson's Paper Bolts Democratic Ticket." Patterson had not wanted to go that far that fast, but John Arkins, back in Denver, had seized the initiative. Frank Arkins later sketched that convention-night scene in the *News* city room for Miss Meredith:

Times had been getting steadily worse, politically and every way. In our part of the country nobody wanted Cleveland, but there was no other candidate of the same importance in the party. He got the nomination on a platter. As I recall it, the Republicans were not specially joyous over the renomination of Harrison. As for Weaver, nobody thought he had a chance except the lunatic fringe of his party, who could believe anything. Nobody goes crazy working for a man they think can't win.

So, it was a grim party that met in the telegraph room that night. You know Uncle John. He stormed up and down and said, over and over: "This paper is never going to support Cleveland. I don't care if Patterson is a delegate to that convention. He'll probably get howled down when he brings in that minority report. . . ."

Then the wires began their clickety-click, Seaman taking it down, and I copying. Patterson was telling what had happened, and advising that the paper take a wait and see attitude. Uncle John broke in with words you could put on a wire but not over a telephone . . . he said a daily paper would never get anywhere waiting for whatever is going to happen next. Making things happen is the newspaper job.

Then Patterson made a mistake. He was "Cold Irish" all right, but the other two [Arkins and Fred Meredith, managing editor] were the red-hot fighting type, that don't take anything that looks like an order. He demanded that nothing be done until he got home—some thirty-six hours off, according to train schedules. . . . Uncle John burned up the wires. The printable part of what he said was something like this:

"You don't understand the situation here. I do and now is the time to act. You know this paper could never support Cleveland and our people wouldn't support it, if it did. The Omaha platform [Populist] may be wild-eyed in spots, but folks know what it means, and they like it. As for Weaver, he served in the Union Army, that ought to give him the G.A.R. vote, and he was in Congress. This paper will announce tomorrow morning that it will support Weaver. Release your editorial, Fred, and tell 'em to spread our turn to Weaver all over the front page. Shut off the wire, Frank. We've just got time to make the mail."

So, Seaman shut down the key, with Patterson still protesting and begging for time and sending wires over the Western Union. . . .⁴

Thus Tom Patterson, who had borne the heat of the day as one of the fathers of Colorado Democracy, found himself supporting James B. Weaver and leading the Populist revolt. When he got back to Denver he discovered that Arkins' gauging of public sentiment once again had

⁴Ellis Meredith, op. cit., pp. 45-46.

been a sure one. Even with extra help in the *News* business office there was a string of men waiting to subscribe that reached down into the next block. Colorado was one of four states Weaver carried, and the Populists swept to local power with the election of a governor and two congressmen. Only the terms of the two senators—Henry M. Teller and Edward O. Wolcott—spared them in the rebellion. Party lines had been thoroughly scrambled. Splinter groups which called themselves Silver Democrats and Silver Republicans held conventions, entered the campaign, and helped split the vote. It was the first time Colorado had been out of the Republican column in a presidential year.

The following year, 1893, was the bleakest Colorado had known. Cleveland—described by Arkins as “that man of all belly and neck”—signed the bill repealing the Sherman Purchase Act. Panic hit. In three days twelve Denver banks failed. The smelters closed, and then the silver mines which had gushed wealth in the eighties. Thousands of men were thrown out of work. Bread lines and a relief camp appeared in Denver, where a unit of Jacob Coxey’s army formed and laid plans to sail on Washington down the Platte in a fleet of scows made from scrap lumber and unguarded outhouses. The little silver city of Georgetown formally seceded from the Union by vote of its board of selectmen. The *News*, though its circulation boomed, shared the common fate. Its advertising revenues were suddenly halved.

In the midst of the panic Populist Governor Davis H. (“Bloody Bridles”) Waite was having his troubles. Waite was a benign old gentleman from Aspen, firm in his principles, sympathetic and well meaning in his efforts to aid the suffering wage earners of the state, but totally untalented in public administration. His deficiencies had been recognized by the Populists themselves during the campaign, but he had refused a five-thousand-dollar bribe to withdraw from the ticket to which he was morally committed. Waite won his ferocious, and entirely uncharacteristic, nickname by a phrase in a speech. When Cleveland called the special session of Congress to repeal the Sherman Act a large and boisterous rally was held in Denver’s Coliseum Hall. In the main address Governor Waite warned Wall Street, which was being blamed for the monetary disasters, that the people would rise up and fight and that “it is better, infinitely better, that blood should flow to the horses’ bridles rather than our national liberties should be destroyed.” The press of the nation seized upon the statement as evidence that wild-eyed Colorado was headed toward repudiation and revolution.

Now that he was in the governor’s chair Waite found that the road to reform has chuckholes. His attorney general got himself tarred and feathered in Colorado Springs. The legislature revolted against some of his more exotic notions. And he had to mount a military operation to get rid of one set of his appointees.

The “City Hall War” made him the butt of every joke and helped

limit the Populist regime to one sitting. At this time, by a patronage-hungry act of the previous legislature, some of Denver's municipal officials were appointed by the governor and subject to his control. Waite's appointees to the police and fire board failed to carry out to his satisfaction orders for a cleanup of gambling hells, the red-light district, and law-violating saloons. He dismissed the board and appointed a new one, but the incumbents refused to budge. They had been confirmed by the state Senate, they said, and could be impeached only by act of the legislature.

Waite called out the state militia and marched three hundred of them down to the City Hall at Fourteenth and Larimer streets. Artillery was trained on the building. The rebellious board concentrated the entire police force in the hall, and the policemen called upon their friends and associates of the underworld for reinforcements. "Soapy" Smith recruited and dispatched a platoon of gunmen and dynamiters to man the City Hall tower.

Thousands of citizens jammed adjacent streets to watch the spectacle. A shot would have produced carnage. Fortunately no shot was fired, and the casualties consisted only of a few women who fainted in the press of the throng. Waite was persuaded to call in national troops to maintain order and status quo while the courts took up the question. The law upheld his right to remove his appointees, but by then the victory was a Pyrrhic one.

Waite's Populist regime gave the vote to Colorado women, and there were some crusty males, jaded on suffragette feathers and flutters, who firmly asserted *that* was as big a blunder as the City Hall War.

The Populist revolt in Colorado passed. It had not been the deep-rooted agrarian rebellion that seethed in the Midwestern states. The issue of silver alone had given the Colorado People's Party its brief hour of victory, and once Cleveland had done his worst, Centennial State politicians went back to orthodox alignments.

The injury to Colorado's economy remained, however. When the "Boy Orator of the Platte," William Jennings Bryan of Nebraska, began to flay the "gold bugs," Patterson and his *News* were happy to go back home to their Democratic party. Colorado roared its approval of Bryan's 1896 speech against the gold standard: "You shall not press down upon the brow of labor this crown of thorns, you shall not crucify mankind upon a cross of gold." Senator Henry Teller, six times elected by the people of Colorado and a Republican of national prominence and influence, bolted his party to the Bryan banner. His disaffection brought cannon firing on the lawn of the state Capitol in Denver, bonfires in the streets, and joyous parades.

In this soaring of hope and happiness the *News* gave everything it had to the campaign for Bryan. Patterson stumped the state personally, and the *News* thundered against the gold standard, Wall Street, and the

bloated monopolistic corporations. Bryan carried Colorado in 1896, in 1900, and again in 1908 following his nomination for a third try by the Democratic National Convention which met in Denver's new City Auditorium.

The Republicans had returned to power within the state in 1894 by means of a vicious campaign based on religious and racial prejudices. The American Protective Association—predecessor to the Ku Klux Klan in Colorado politics—entered the picture and practically took over the party, which was so eager to win again that its candidates would not renounce the rabid anti-Catholicism of the APA. They straddled the issue, accepted APA support and dominance, and won.⁵

Chief rabble-rouser of the APA was one "Graveyard Johnny" Voight, pathological in his religious hatreds. Voight discovered that the city of Denver had deeded a portion of a congressional land grant to the diocese of Denver for use as Calvary Cemetery. This was illegal, he decided. So he attempted to "homestead" the cemetery, a plot of ground lying just east of present Cheesman Park. The courts beat him off, but "Graveyard Johnny" meantime was organizing APA "lodges" throughout the state. Working the scapegoat gambit in a time of unemployment and economic depression, the APA infiltrated the not unwilling Republican conventions and named its slate. During the regime of Governor Albert W. McIntire, 1895-97, no Catholic was permitted to hold any state office or job, however menial.

The Republicans came back in strength in the next few years, but between Bryanism, depression, and growing industrialization Colorado never again would be the Grand Old Party's exclusive preserve. In 1901, Tom Patterson rose up and defeated Senator Ed Wolcott, who had been keynoter of the Republican National Convention and prominently mentioned as McKinley's running mate instead of Teddy Roosevelt. Patterson brought Colorado's second Senate seat home from Massachusetts. He served in the Senate from 1901 to 1907.

In addition to slam-bang politics there were other diversions during this era to woo the minds of Coloradans away from Cleveland's "crime" and the sick mining industry. For one item, growth was continuing in spite of the panic of '93. By the turn of the century Denver had become a sizable little city of 133,859 persons, up from 106,713 in 1890. Enthusiasm ran high for the Spanish-American War. When the call came for sixteen hundred enlistments there were more volunteers than could be accepted. A camp was set up in then undeveloped City Park. The *News* now was large enough to have its own war correspondent—Arthur C. Johnson, Tom Patterson's nephew. Johnson sailed with the Colorado boys from San Francisco, and his dispatches told how the new 1st Colorado Regiment raised the flag over Manila on August 13, 1898.

⁵Thomas Fulton Dawson, *Life and Character of Edward Oliver Wolcott* (New York, 1911), Vol. I, pp. 219-20.

Their band played "There'll Be a Hot Time in the Old Town Tonight." That robustly raucous song, soon the darling of political rally bands everywhere, reputedly came from a Negro mammy in Cripple Creek via the girls of the ensemble at the Palace variety hall there.⁶

Denver's continued growth helped ease the depression, but it was gold that ended it. Cripple Creek gold. The mountains opened up again and smiled down on their Queen City.

The great days of Colorado silver mining ended abruptly in 1893. Most of the mines never recovered, and the ghost towns the tourists see, the sagging shaft houses, the sprawling mine dumps, weathered to ochers and purples, date from that year.

But in 1891, almost simultaneously with the first pangs of silver's death struggle, Cripple began to boom. Cripple Creek lies in a high basin, now denuded of its forest growth, immediately to the west of Pike's Peak. During the first quarter century of its life, 1891-1916, Cripple produced \$340,000,000 in gold and an entirely new crop of mining millionaires. Since then, through 1952, the camp has pushed the total to beyond \$700,000,000.⁷ It is still one of the few places in Colorado where gold continues to be mined extensively.

The town of Cripple Creek spurted to 50,000 persons by 1900. One carload of ore brought an all-time record price of \$219,040. A three-dollar-a-day carpenter, Winfield Scott Stratton, sold his Independence mine for \$10,000,000 and became one of Colorado's leading philanthropists. When he died twelve women claimed to be his widow.⁸ All in all the camp yielded twenty-seven men—average age, forty-two—who rated as millionaires. Among them were Spencer Penrose, Charles Tutt, Albert E. Carlton, Verner Z. Reed, Ed Giddings, all names famous in Colorado.

While Cripple Creek was booming Creede, discovered in the same year, was going broke. Creede was a silver camp farther southwest in the mountains, and it spewed forth nearly five million ounces of silver in 1892 just before the roof fell in. Among the characters attracted to Creede in its brief heyday were "Soapy" Smith, Bob Ford, and the dashing and elegant Richard Harding Davis. "Soapy" Smith found the pickings good. Ford, the "dirty little coward" who killed Jesse James, found death in his gambling hall.⁹ Davis, epitome of the eternal sophomore, traveled west in 1892 for *Harper's Monthly* and reached Creede—which he pro-

⁶Hafen, *Colorado and Its People*, Vol. I, pp. 501-2; Fritz, *Colorado: The Centennial State* (New York, 1941), p. 445.

⁷The fabulous story in full detail is told by Marshall Sprague in *Money Mountain: The Story of Cripple Creek Gold* (Boston, 1953).

⁸Frank Waters is Stratton's biographer in *Midas of the Rockies* (New York, 1937; Denver, 1949).

⁹Nolie Mumey, *Creede: The History of a Colorado Silver Mining Town* (Denver, 1949), pp. 135ff.

nounced with the terminal *e*—in time to see \$1,500,000 offered, and refused, for the Holy Moses mine. He was outraged by such economic insouciance: "Any man who will live in a log house at the foot of a mountain, and drink melted snow any longer than he has to do so, or refuse that much money for *anything*, when he could live in the Knickerbocker Flats, and drive forth in a private hansom with rubber tires, is no longer an object of public interest."¹⁰ Davis was more impressed by the polo he saw being played at Colorado Springs on a field over which wild Indians had galloped scarcely three decades earlier.

Editor of the short-lived *Creede Chronicle* was Cy Warman, who subsequently joined the staff of the *Rocky Mountain News* and still later achieved a measure of turn-of-the-century fame as a versifier.¹¹ Warman summed up the habits of the silver camp:

It's day all day in the day-time
And there is no night in Creede.

When Creede went bust Warman came back to Denver and joined the *News* as railroad reporter. His poem, "Doing Railroads for the *Rocky Mountain News*," gives a good indication of the life of a reporter in the Denver of the 1890s:

It was sometime in the P.M. of the fall of '92
I had cashed in the *Creede Chronicle*—had nothing much to do—
I had seen the man of leisure who was loafing on the street
Who had every fad and fashion from his head down to his feet,
And this prince was a reporter; so I shined my Sunday shoes,
And went down to do the railroads for *The Rocky Mountain News*.

Now the city man was Martin, from McCullagh's *Democrat*,
And he glanced over his glasses as I doffed my derby hat—
I had owned a daily paper in the springtime of the year,
That had sunk ten thousand dollars; I had nothing then to fear—
I had planned that in the morning I would dally with the muse,
In the P.M. do the railroads for *The Rocky Mountain News*.

"Well, ahem, ahem!" said Martin, clearing cobwebs from his throat,
While the smoke from his Havana round my face began to float;
"I presume that you're in touch with the officials here in town,
Having worked for them; however, I shall have to send you down
To the police court." Then he coughed again and shed his overshoes,
"That's included with the railroads on *The Rocky Mountain News*." . .

¹⁰Richard Harding Davis, *The West from a Car-Window* (New York, 1903), p. 68. (A collection of Davis' *Harper's* pieces.)

¹¹Levette J. Davidson and Prudence Bostwick, *The Literature of the Rocky Mountain West* (Caldwell, Ida., 1939), pp. 67ff.

"We're a little bit short-handed—you will do the county courts;
 And this evening, after dinner, drift around among the sports;
 There's a prizefight down at Murphy's." Then he paused and rubbed his head.
 "That's all I have to say now," this encyclopedia said.
 I didn't say a word then, but I thought it beat the Jews
 The way they did the railroads down on *The Rocky Mountain News*. . . .

I had buttoned up my overcoat, was headed for the stair,
 When the quidnunc's restless fingers wandered thru his wealth of hair;
 I had reached the elevator when he called me back and said:
 "You will have to do the statehouse, for the statehouse man is dead."
 My poor heart sank within me, but I couldn't well refuse,
 Since it all went with the railroads on *The Rocky Mountain News*. . . .

"See the concerts at the churches in the early eve," he said;
 "Try to do Dean Hart's cathedral where an heiress is to wed
 An English dude from Dublin—Freeman won't be here today.
 You may write about a column on What Old-Timers Say
 About the San Juan Gold Excitement—but mind, we can't excuse
 Any neglect of the railroads on *The Rocky Mountain News*."

I was off. For ten long hours thru the slush and snow and sleet,
 Up the stone steps of the statehouse, out again and down the street,
 Till I paused to feed at midnight—hit the bottle till my soup
 Seemed a sea of strange assignments—every oyster was a scoop,
 Mused on how the other papers would be burdened with the blues,
 When they read about the railroads in *The Rocky Mountain News*.

After lunch I read my copy, which told how the Rio Grande
 Had a good house, and the organ was wide open working sand.
 'Twas a cold day for the criminals who proceed in wicked ways,
 For they raided all the churches, and the dean got twenty days,
 The soprano dropped her crown, the policeman warped his flues,
 Throwing in too much cold water," said *The Rocky Mountain News*. . . .

. . . The next day I got a letter that would give a man the blues:
 "This is good, but we can't read it," Signed: "*The Rocky Mountain News*." . . .

Now I view the proud reporter as he swiftly sallies by,
 A bob-tailed flush upon his cheek, a twinkle in his eye;
 He has my sincere sympathy—I do not want his place,
 I pine not for his twinkle, nor the flush upon his face;
 No matter what inducements, I invariably refuse,
 Since the day I did the railroads for *The Rocky Mountain News*.¹²

Creede's new silver, but more especially Cripple's new gold, helped Denver weather through the mining crisis. Banks reopened and the Mining Exchange, a sink of gloom for several years, began to do a lively

¹²Levette J. Davidson, ed., *Poems of the Old West* (Denver, 1951), pp. 173-75.

business again. Building continued. The opulent Brown Palace had its gala opening on August 12, 1892, just in time to greet the panic. But the hotel, since the stopping place of presidents and potentates, managed to stay open—probably because of its superior services. Among these was gratuitous cremation for any deceased guest who desired incineration without delay. (Up to the 1920s, when the basement crematory was discontinued, no guest had taken advantage of the service.) The Brown was paneled in onyx, and it offered a library, fresh cream from its own pampered cows, swimming pools, Turkish baths, billiard rooms, and bowling alleys. The management boasted that its bridal suites were so breath-taking that “hopeless old maids and bachelors would be legally justified in hanging themselves or each other, after a view of these lovely apartments.” The laundry service was so rapid that “even the man fleeing from an unpaid board bill is overtaken by his clean linen.”¹³ The aging but well-preserved Brown Palace is still Denver’s top-ranking hotel, and it stands high with travelers who know the world’s finest inns. A skyscraper annex, the Brown Palace West, is being completed, linked to the main building by a bridge over Tremont Place, but some of the 1890s décor of the *grande dame* of American hotels is being carefully preserved.

Creede’s rude earthiness repelled Richard Harding Davis, but he found the Denver of the Brown Palace an oasis of civilization in a land of barbarians. He was fresh out of Lehigh and Johns Hopkins and much impressed by gentlemen’s clubs. The posh Denver Club was an eye opener, and at the University Club he was amazed to find a membership that could “sing more different college songs in a given space of time than any other body of men I have met.” Denver, he decided, was “a thoroughly Eastern city—a smaller New York in an encircling range of white-capped mountains.”

If you look up at its towering office buildings, you can easily imagine yourself, were it not for the breadth of the thoroughfare, in down-town New York; and though the glimpse of the mountains at the end of the street in place of the spars and mast-heads of the East and North rivers undecives you, the mud at your feet serves to help out the delusion. Denver is a really beautiful city, but—and this, I am sure, few people in New York will believe—it has the worst streets in the country.

. . . The citizen of Denver takes a modest pride in the public schools, the private houses, and the great mountains, which seem but an hour’s walk distant and are twenty miles away; but he is proudest before all of two things—of his celery and his cablecars. . . .

Then New Yorker Davis concluded by anticipating what has become the standard cliché of visitors to *his* city. “The West is a very wonderful,

¹³*Rocky Mountain News*, Feb. 20, 1955, quoting a descriptive booklet issued by the Brown Palace in 1892.

large, unfinished, and out-of-doors portion of our country, and a most delightful place to *visit*.”¹⁴ The italics are his.

As the Denver tempo picked up again with towering buildings, Pascal celery, college songs, and cable cars, the *News* was getting ready for more expansion and another move. Circulation now was 23,918 daily, 31,924 Sunday, and in 1897 the deep, narrow quarters next to the entrance of the Patterson & Thomas Block were cramped. The paper was back to a spread-eagle format of nine columns splashed with bold cartoons. Publication was on a seven-day basis, and the subscription rate was down to twelve and a half cents a week or fifty-five cents a month. Headlines were appearing in red ink. The *News* had its own special bureau in Cripple Creek to report the life-giving boom. An early edition was being printed to catch the trains to Wyoming readers.

On March 27, 1897, Patterson moved his *News* two blocks down to a corner, ground-floor location in the Markham Hotel at the southeast intersection of Seventeenth and Lawrence streets. With the move came another new press. Into the new quarters went an 80,000-pound “triple-decker, straight-line” made by Walter Scott & Company of Plainfield, New Jersey. The press could “do everything but think,” the *News* beamed proudly in its anniversary edition on April 23. Three rolls of paper fed simultaneously into the 12-foot-high Scott, permitting it to print, paste, cut, fold, and count papers ranging up to a gigantic 24 pages in size. The speed was dazzling: 24,000 impressions an hour, twice the rate of the two Gosses being replaced.

Typesetting machines were now in use. Ottmar Mergenthaler, Swabian clockmaker and immigrant American genius, had perfected his Linotype in July of 1884, but the machine didn’t have much newspaper acceptance until the New York *Tribune* installed an improved version in 1886. When the Simplex model appeared in 1890 success was assured.¹⁵ In Denver the *Times* stole a march on the *News* in adopting the complex new labor-saving machine. Records of the Mergenthaler Company show that six leased No. 1 models were shipped January 22, 1892, to the *Times*.¹⁶ These were the first Linotypes to make their way west of the Mississippi. The following year the *News* raised the *Times’* ante and installed eight machines, adding another in 1894. By 1896 there were three thousand Linotypes in use throughout the world, and at least fifteen of them were chattering busily in the little upstart city of Denver.

The year 1893 also saw introduction of the first “type-writers” into the *News* editorial rooms. Some of the older reporters and editors were

¹⁴Richard Harding Davis, op. cit., pp. 215ff.

¹⁵Willi Mengel, *Ottmar Mergenthaler and the Printing Revolution*, (Brooklyn, 1954), pp. 52-56.

¹⁶Letter from Jackson Burke, director of typographic development, Mergenthaler Linotype Company, to the author, Mar. 5, 1958.

holdouts against the infernal new device that made so much noise and didn't give a man time to think. "Cap" Smith, for example, snorted at Calligraphs and Olivers and continued to write in his cryptographic script for the rest of his newspaper days. But gradually the machine took over from the quill, and the incidence of peptic ulcer in newspaper compositors must have nose-dived.

Except for "Cap" and a few other old-timers, the *News* editorial staff was shifting. Charles MacAllister Willcox, who had covered the City Hall War and invented "Dynamite Dolly," resigned as a reporter to go into business and become a leading merchant and social luminary. John C. Martin, his city editor, departed. The talented cartoonist Wilbur Steele was hired away, and E. B. Smith took over the easel as *News* staff artist in 1897. W. F. Stapleton had gone to the *Republican* out of political conscience. Fred Meredith resigned as managing editor in 1894 to return to farming, and Thomas E. McKenna held the post for twelve years. McKenna covered Creede for the *News* in 1892 and Cripple Creek in 1895. The last link with the founding editor was broken in 1904 when Byers' brother-in-law, W. R. Thomas, quit the paper to become history professor and authority on irrigation law at the State Agricultural College in Fort Collins. Thomas had been with the paper off and on for thirty-five years. He died in 1914.

One of the most famous turn-of-the-century *News* staffers was Edward Keating. He gave up an eighteen-dollar-a-month job as Western Union messenger in 1894 to become a copyholder and proofreader for the *Republican*. Soon thereafter he switched to the *News* proofroom and had worked his way up to telegraph editor when the paper moved down Seventeenth Street from Curtis to Lawrence. He was manning the wires the night the *Maine* blew up. Keating became city editor of the *Times*, 1902-5, and managing editor of the *News*, 1906-11. Among his other duties, in the pattern of Cy Wanman and his railroads, Keating did much of the paper's political writing in the late nineties and became convinced that if others could get themselves elected he could too. Managing editor Tom McKenna gave him a thirty-day leave to campaign.

"When I told him what I wanted to do, Tom threw up his hands and read me off," Keating recalls. "Finally he gave me the leave but told me, 'Be sure to be back here the night after election'."

To everyone's surprise, Keating, then twenty-three, was elected city auditor in 1899 in a 6-1 walkaway. When his term expired in 1901 he reported back to McKenna and became political writer again. A deep-dyed Bryan liberal, the young Keating idolized his big boss, Tom Patterson, and still regards him as "the greatest man Colorado has seen up to date."

Keating left the *News* in 1911 to become an editor on his own with purchase of the *Pueblo Leader*, but almost immediately he was back in politics. He served as a member of the state Land Board, 1911-13, and in

1912 was elected to Congress, where he served two terms, 1913-19. Remaining in Washington, he took over the weekly newspaper, *Labor*, published by the railroad brotherhoods, and built it to a circulation of 1,000,000 copies. "I planned to stay with *Labor* six months," he says, "and I stayed thirty-three years." He retired as lifetime editor emeritus in 1953.

In the 1890s Denver was supporting six daily, thirty-seven weekly, and twenty-two monthly publications, in a town of just over 100,000 population. Along with the *News* the dailies were the *Republican*, *Times*, *Post*, *Sun*, and *Colorado Journal*, the latter two short-lived. One of the monthlies was John Brisben Walker's *Interocean*. Walker, who made and lost one fortune in Colorado, moved on to New York and founded *Cosmopolitan* magazine, which he sold to William Randolph Hearst for a million dollars. Walker died in Brooklyn in 1931, "stony broke again," the papers said. He had planned a castlelike summer White House for William Howard Taft on Mount Falcon west of Denver. Fire destroyed the huge building in 1910. Only its blackened stone walls remain.

The *News* moved into the bright new twentieth century with coverage of one of the most sickening mob crimes in the history of American violence, a lynching so coldly and deliberately calculated that the newspapers had time to string field telegraph wires to the scene.

On November 8, 1900, thirteen-year-old Louise Frost was found moaning, mortally wounded by fourteen dirk stabs, in a prairie slough near her farm home on the outskirts of Limon, eighty-six miles east of Denver. There were heel marks on her forehead and cheek. She died before a doctor could reach her home. It never was ascertained officially that she had been raped, although this was asserted for a fact by the Denver papers, which, with the sole exception of the *News*, made carnival of the story. The *Times* reported that Louise's pitiful little body lay in her two-room home, "appealing to the manhood of Lincoln county and of that state that her ruthless slayer be apprehended and the awful crime avenged." The *Republican* and the *Post* openly demanded lynching for the murderer. Mob mania seethed in the city.

Two days later a feeble-minded colored boy, Preston Porter, Jr., was arrested in Denver. He was sixteen, son of a railroad laborer who lived in a boxcar on a siding near Limon. He confessed that he had killed Louise on her way home from school. On November 16, Sheriff John W. Freeman of Lincoln County boarded a train with the shackled boy, "ostensibly" to take him to Hugo for trial, the *Times* said. The paper freely predicted that the boy was "on his way to a death as certain as was that of his victim . . . if possible it will be made more atrocious." The train would not be permitted to pass Limon, the *Times* said, and ranchers of the Limon area had threatened to come to Denver with Winchesters, "kill all resistance and batter the jails to dust."

The train did not pass Limon. It was flagged down, and Sheriff Freeman surrendered his prisoner without a struggle to a half-dozen armed men. With a rope around his neck, Preston was dragged out behind a wagon to the scene of his crime. The boy seemed to enjoy being the center of attention and tore leaves from the Bible in his hand to distribute to the crowd as souvenirs.

Everything was in readiness. Newspaper artists were on the ground, sketch pads in hand. Telegraph lines had been installed. The telegraphers used a stack of railroad ties as a desk. A crowd of hundreds was waiting. Many of the onlookers, a fair proportion of them women, had driven out from Denver by buggy to see the spectacle.

A railroad rail had been driven into the prairie at the precise spot where Louise had fallen. Around it a platform of scantlings was raised. Preston was chained feet and breast to the rail. Kindling wood was stacked about his feet and drenched with kerosene.

Louise's father, R. W. Frost, stepped forward and struck a match. "I can touch this match without a shake of my hand." He bent over and lighted the pyre. The crowd cheered. A dozen other men lighted the wood in other places. There was laughter at the boy's cries and writhing agony as he slowly died.

The *News* lashed out at the lynchers and spat editorial disgust on the morbid crowd. "More Ferocious Than Indians Callously Torturing Prey," the headline read. The *Times'* headline was an eight-column banner, "Death in Flames," to which an artist had added a blazing aura in red.

An inquest found the lynching to be the work of "parties unknown", although the ringleaders were well-identified and prominent Lincoln County ranchers. No one ever molested them.¹⁷

The burning became a national scandal, and Colorado smarted under the shocked attacks of the Eastern press. But in a few months the furore died away and the *News'* anger beat itself out on a wall of official refusal to act. The paper had a more pleasant business to which it could turn to wash away the bad taste.

It was moving day again. This time to the finest and most modern newspaper plant in town, and the paper's first home of its own since Byers' old News Block on Larimer Street. The new building was far uptown at 1720 Welton Street, so far up toward the retreating residential area, in fact, that the business office remained in the Markham Hotel until 1909 to be closer to the center of commerce.

Patterson's two-story house stood on the corner of Welton Street and Seventeenth across and down the street a short block from the brown sandstone Denver Club, for which he had little use. H. A. W. Tabor and his Baby Doe had lived diagonally across the intersection in the 1600

¹⁷The case was summarized in the *Rocky Mountain News*, June 2, 1929.

block of Welton Street. Patterson had been watching real estate transactions, and he gambled that the downtown district was shifting up the hill. He was right. The new building proved to be an ideal location for the *News* for a half century, though the leg men of 1901 complained it was a long hike to City Hall and Union Station. Denver never had a "Park Row," but for a time just before the end of the century most of the papers were concentrated in a six-block area bounded by Larimer and Curtis streets, Seventeenth to Fifteenth. City Hall was nearby at Fourteenth and Larimer, and the post office handy at Sixteenth and Arapahoe.

Patterson put up his new plant just to the rear of his home, which fronted on Seventeenth Street. In a few years he would move his family on up to the de luxe residential district on Capitol Hill and the old house would be built around with an "L" of one-story stores, some of them later occupied by the *News*' business offices.

Circulation continued to rise, and Patterson built for the future. In 1900 the *News* was distributing 26,375 copies daily and 35,768 on Sunday. The new building would provide for that sort of production plus a healthy margin for growth. A 20-foot excavation was dug for the press-room. A \$75,000, two-story structure rose above ground, and a builder could get a lot for \$75,000 in 1901. Venetian wrought-iron ornamental work, for example.

The architect was Frank E. Edbrooke, who had built the Tabor Grand Opera House, the Brown Palace, and was completing the state Capitol. Edbrooke was sent on a tour of the "offices of all the great newspapers in the country to adapt to the use of this paper all that is latest and best in time-saving and labor-saving devices." He turned out a design for a four-floor structure specifically adapted to newspaper production. Then he let his artistic soul soar for the Welton Street frontage:

The façade design, it is believed, will prove the handsomest in Denver. The style is classic, as befits a home of wisdom and the art preservative. The first floor will have a combed copper-bronze front, and the second story will be bronze and granite colored brick with terra cotta trimmings.¹⁸

Shoulder-high windows gave passers-by a view down on the two new Goss presses, each "more than double the capacity of any other press in Denver" and equipped with the "very latest color appliances." The presses cost fifty-five thousand dollars and gave the *News* "greater printing capacity than all of the presses of the other dailies combined." Bay windows were set out from the second story, and above the Venetian ironwork there was a battlemented cornice and a tall flagstaff. Until the Patterson Building went up flush against the south wall of the *News*

¹⁸*Rocky Mountain News*, June 6, 1901.

there was a corner entrance with swinging doors on each side under archways of combed bronze. A veritable Temple of the Press.

All omens seemed auspicious and the sky was mile-high blue when the *News* moved uptown to its new home in the summer of 1901. But on the horizon had appeared that cloud which is always "no bigger than a man's hand." Shortly it would form itself into a fist, figuratively and literally.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

Yellow, Read and True Blue

THE *News* had no one but itself to blame for the *Denver Post*. When it went soaring off on glorious crusades with the Populists and Bryan, the hard-shelled Democrats were left with no place to go. Their leader, Tom Patterson, had turned his back on them. So they started their own newspaper. Neither they nor anyone else in Denver anticipated that the sickly cub would be "weaned on tiger milk."

The first *Post* appeared August 8, 1892. A group of leading die-hard Democrats got together \$50,000 and rented dingy quarters at 1744 Curtis Street, just down in the next block from the *News*. W. P. Caruthers was general manager. The new sheet held the banner high for Grover Cleveland and also declared itself for purity—political, municipal, and female. It was promptly nicknamed "White Wings." But the events of 1892 made the name "Cleveland" a dirty word in Colorado, and if newspaper purity had as many cash subscribers as vocal advocates there would be more saints of the press. The first *Post*, blessed and sinless, died in its crib on August 29, 1893, shortly after its first birthday.

The second attempt was called the *Evening Post*, and the kitty was upped to \$100,000. When the *Evening Post* began publication on June 22, 1894, the panic of '93 was still growling through Denver streets and scratching at the doors of closed banks. The office was in the red sandstone Chicago Block at 1734 Curtis Street, a couple of doors south from the crypt of its late-lamented predecessor. The change of address did not produce a change of fortunes. By autumn of the following year Democracy had regained none of its popularity, the *Evening Post* had won few subscribers, and the till was bare. The owners were more than happy to sell their \$100,000 property for \$12,500 to a thirty-four-year-old Kansas City lottery manipulator and a thirty-nine-year-old former Windsor Hotel bartender.¹

Frederick Gilmer Bonfils supplied the money. Harry Heye Tammen contributed the idea of buying a dead horse and a shrewd appraisal of what Denver would stand for. Neither knew the first thing about newspapering. Some of his early signed editorials, in fact, indicate that Bonfils was barely literate, although he had been exposed to a West Point education. The cheerful, amoral Harry Tammen never pretended to

¹Lawrence Martin, *So the People May Know* (Denver, 1951), pp. 5-7.

cultural accomplishments. On the contrary, he made it his pleasure to pose as a happy oaf. Happy, Harry Tammen undoubtedly was; an oaf, never. By an instinct as sure as Barnum's, he knew exactly what would make the suckers sit up and take notice. In the fall of 1895 he was in somewhat straitened circumstances, but until the panic hit he had been doing a highly lucrative business fleecing the tourists with a museum-curio store where one could view Moon-Eye the petrified Indian princess (acquired at auction from a bankrupt undertaker) and purchase one's choice of genuine redskin craftwork (made in Brooklyn) or authenticated scalps of Geronimo. Tammen was always the first to concede he was three quarters con man.

Harry Tammen's short figure was plump and soft; he detested exercise and had no use for the outdoors. He was relaxed, friendly, and generous, an honest, thoroughly engaging rogue. His partner was in nearly every way his opposite. About the only quality they shared was a consecrated determination to relieve unwary Denver of every dollar that wasn't nailed down.

Next after Buffalo Bill Cody, F. G. Bonfils was the handsomest man who ever walked the Denver streets. The eyes were blue and crackled with vitality. The hair was dark and curled in ringlets over a noble brow. Above a magnificently groomed and waxed mustache, the nose was patrician, ever so slightly aquiline. His chin and jaw were firm and prominent but subtly short of jutting. Although he stood only five feet ten, his erect, military bearing made him seem to tower over men much taller. "F.G." was impeccable in a noisy sort of way. His taste in suits ran to prominent checks. On him they looked good. Whereas Tammen looked as if he had slept in his clothes on a depot bench, Bonfils always seemed to have just stepped from a shower and been clothed by the brothers Brooks in a bold and giddy mood. The manner was reserved, lofty, and regal, and Bonfils strode the earth like a conqueror.

Corsica was in the family background, and Bonfils heard so much point made of the homeland and its most famous son that he came in time to believe himself a lineal descendant of Napoleon. The name originally had been Buonfiglio, but his father, a distinguished Missouri probate judge, had shortened it. The *Kansas City Star* said Bonfils had rung a few other and less derivative changes on the theme: E. Little, Silas Carr, M. Dauphin, and L. E. Winn. Various Missouri and Kansas officials were eager to establish contact with the elusive Mr. Winn to discuss the matter of the Little Louisiana Lottery. There were ugly charges that the lottery, promoted by Winn, had been won by Winn. Moreover, there were questions about certain lots Bonfils supposedly had sold in Oklahoma. The land turned out to be in Texas. By these and other means, the *Star* asserted, Bonfils had acquired a sizable fortune. It was at this point that Tammen, ever respectful of genius, learned about the Corsican and purposefully entered his life. Tammen always contended

gaily that he had "landed a sucker" in Bonfils. As for Bonfils, he could afford to smile at his friend's crude brashness; whatever lotteries, real estate, and gambling had yielded, the *Post* would multiply many times over.

Gene Fowler has given a full accounting of Tammen and Bonfils in his incomparable *Timber Line*, surely the liveliest book ever written about an American newspaper and one which marches on and on through multiple printings. No one who did not live in Denver during the first three decades of the twentieth century can believe half what Fowler says. But if *Timber Line* reads like fantasy it is only because in this case, with only the most nominal literary license, fact is far more antic than fiction.

As time passed the town began to call them "Tam" and "Bon," not necessarily with affection. They maintained a stuffed baby elephant—named Tambon—in the city room, and they ran a circus as a logical ancillary to their style of newspapering. Bonfils had the doors removed from the cubicles in the gents' room lest his employees waste precious time. He professed a fatherly concern for each and every person on his payroll, from the street-corner newsie to the managing editor. He was particularly solicitous about their character development and was careful not to sap their morals or sow temptation in their pathways by paying inordinate salaries. Now and again Bon would appear on the balcony outside his office window and scatter bright new pennies to crowds of urchins below. This did not arise from softness of head or heart; Bonfils practiced a soulful reverence for coin of the land, whatever the denomination. It was promotion, a part of the partners' policy that there should always be something stirring and spectacular happening around the *Post*. On one occasion a local poetess timidly suggested remuneration for her verses which the *Post* had published. Bonfils was shaken by the crassness.

"You mean you want *money*?"

"I think my work should be paid for," the little lady said. "Don't you?"

"I am amazed," Bon said with a deep sadness. "My dear child, Jesus never asked for money."

Then there was the case of the svelte Miss Marguerite Frey. Miss Frey won a beauty contest sponsored by the *Post*. She went on to Chicago and won the national contest too. It was then disclosed by a disaffected member of the *Post* staff that the foresighted Bon had forced Miss Frey to sign a contract binding her to pay all her winnings to him in exchange for a place on the *Post* payroll at ten dollars a week.

Tam was inclined to be less devious. When he was brought into court on a contempt citation he shook his fist at the judge and declared: "You can put me in jail for twenty years, if you want, but I'll get you yet." The white-faced judge replied: "Case dismissed."

The partners painted their joint office a rich shade of plum and called

it the Red Room. Denver soon learned to call it the Bucket of Blood. Tam and Bon dubbed their *Post* "The Paper with a Heart and Soul."

It was a fantastic partnership, but then the product was fantastic too. The *Post* was a lulu.

But most of the high jinks lay in the future on the sunny noonday of October 28, 1895, when Harry Tammen led his handsome and aristocratic "sucker" away from the check-signing which had made them newspaper publishers. If, as time went on, people would come to call Tammen a pirate, no one would use such a gross term to describe Bonfils. He was all corsair to the tips of his manicured fingernails, romantic, dashing, driven by dark furies.

Bonfils appears to have been somewhat disappointed at the run-down appearance of his new property.

"It's a piddling little paper now," Fowler quotes Tammen as saying in reassurance.² "But we'll wean it on tiger milk." It was a fair, reasonable, and accurate forecast.

The partners strolled arm in arm around the corner and found a vacant dry-goods store at 1019 Sixteenth Street, on the alley across the street from H. A. W. Tabor's opera house and the post office. They rented the two-story building and moved their paper in. Then they set about to stand Denver on its ear.

There were now four daily newspapers in Denver. The *Colorado Journal* had disappeared. The *Sun* went down in July 1894 in a merger with the *Times*, and the *Republican* had swallowed Eugene Field's *Tribune*. This left on the 1900 scene Tom Patterson's *News*, Senator Hill's *Republican*, the *Times*, now owned by David H. Moffat and his banker friends, and the twice-resurrected *Post*. With Bryan parboiling the "gold bugs" in scalding oratory, the *News* was happily back in the Democratic fold. The *Republican* and *Times* hewed to the GOP line, and the former so diligently carried water for the increasingly powerful "corporations" that it became known as the "Kept Lady of Sixteenth Street." The *Post* proudly proclaimed its independence, which, it soon became plain, arose less from firm convictions about journalistic impartiality than from canny estimates (or advance commitments) on which politicians would let Tam and Bon do their thinking.

Historian Jerome Smiley was a little dazed, in his gentleman-scholarly way, as he watched the fur fly. Writing in 1901, when the contestants were only warming up, he closed out his chronicles of Denver journalism as follows:

The four daily newspapers of Denver are metropolitan in their methods, size and character, and every day lay before their readers the news of all the world. Each of the four issues weekly and Sunday morning editions. In every respect the Sunday issues take rank with those in

²Gene Fowler, *Timber Line* (New York, 1933), p. 88.

any city in the west. Indeed, it may fairly be said that there is no division of human activity in Denver in which more enterprise, greater energy, higher ability, are employed than in the production of our newspapers every day in the week. Political zeal in heated campaigns sometimes leads to perhaps undue manifestations of vigor but, after the Colorado custom that probably is an outgrowth of the altitude, of the climate, or the environment, our newspapers are fearfully and wonderfully in earnest in whatever they undertake to do.³

Battle lines were clearly drawn, and the earnestness at least fearful, if not deadly, as the *News* moved up to its new palace on Welton Street in the summer of 1901. For the first time since Gibson's *Herald* had beat it to the streets with a daily edition the *News* was encountering stiff competition. By 1902 the *Post* already had scored striking gains, and the *News* determined to narrow the opposition forces by one.

On October 8 of that year the *News* bought the *Times* from Moffat, who was in need of cash. (Moffat had committed his \$9,000,000 personal fortune to the notion of drilling a six-mile hole through the Rockies for a railroad that would "put Denver on the main line." He lost his fortune and died in 1911 before the Moffat Tunnel was finally completed with public funds in 1928.) In the *Times* purchase Patterson and his son-in-law, R. C. Campbell, each put up half the price, which was not made public. The *Times*, an evening paper, moved to the *News* plant. Although it maintained its own identity and had a separate editorial staff, the *Times* was in effect an afternoon edition of the *News*. The operating corporation became the News-Times Publishing Company.

In the grab for new subscribers which soon developed, all the papers put on canvassing crews. The tintinnabulation of doorbells must have been deafening. Premiums were offered. One of the *News*' come-alongs in 1905 was a hand-powered vacuum cleaner. Frank Plumb, recently retired after nearly fifty years on the *News* staff, remembers the era:

I was a year out of a Chicago high school, and had come to Denver to make a living, preferably as a reporter. I had no training and few aptitudes for the job—merely an intense desire to get it with no clear idea how I would perform it. . . .

Thomas McGill, city editor of The News, was not a well man. He viewed me unenthusiastically. But he needed cubs who could do the work of copy boys. So he suggested that he would try me out, if I could work, say three months, without salary.

That seems on the niggard side. But if he had known exactly how ill-informed and inept I was, he probably would have suggested that I pay The News several dollars a week for the privilege of infesting the office.

³Smiley, *History of Denver*, pp. 672-74.

However, I had to have a wage that would return at least room rent and food. Mr. McGill suggested I see the circulation manager and get a job soliciting subscriptions. I could thus learn the city.

I did just that. The News and the Post then were engaged in a rugged battle for subscribers, advertising and prestige. We doorbell ringers were the expendable infantry in that war.

I "learned the city" and also learned to live on \$5 or \$6 a week. We were paid strictly on commission. The only time, after that, when I entered the editorial offices was when we were given hand-powered vacuum cleaners to offer as premiums to subscribers.

Our boss took us into Publisher Tom Patterson's sanctum. It had a blue Brussels carpet, the only carpet in the building. On this our boss sprinkled talcum powder, and demonstrated how the cleaner would suck it up.

The cleaner, frankly, was what now would be called a stinker. Persons to whom we offered it made suggestions that were neither polite nor practical, as to what we should do with it.

Finally I realized that we doorbell ringers were being routed so that we covered the same sections every 15 days. The housewives came to know our faces; dogs greeted us with bared fangs. . . .⁴

Vacuum cleaners were not enough. The *Post* was sweeping the city. The defunct but unburied sheet Bonfils and Tammen bought had claimed a questionable circulation of 6000 copies. Twenty-seven months later, at the end of 1897, the *Post* was distributed to 24,599 subscribers,⁵ a figure which it had taken the *News* nearly fifty years to attain. By 1907 the *Post* circulation was 83,000, more than the combined total of its three competitors.

"Son," Tammen had told his city editor, "you've seen a vaudeville show, haven't you? It's got every sort of act—laughs, tears, wonder, thrills, melodrama, tragedy, comedy, love and hate. That's what I want you to give our readers."⁶

It was obvious that vaudeville was not dead in Denver. And it was a great show. One day an eight-column screamer in the biggest, boldest railroad Gothic type available: "DOES IT HURT TO BE BORN?" Next day a trout-fishing contest—won by F. G. Bonfils, outdoorsman, and no blushes. Denver was amazed, startled, fascinated, and left waiting, slack-jawed, to see what the *Post* would "pull" next. Scandals were exploited to the hilt, and there was a crucifixion of a public official or non-advertising businessman in each new edition. Everyone damned the *Post*—and nearly everyone subscribed. The *Post's* owners admitted with frankness that they cared not a whit for the community's respect so long as the community kept buying the paper.

⁴*Rocky Mountain News*, May 31, 1952.

⁵Martin, op. cit., p. 13.

⁶*Ibid.*

"Sure," Tammen conceded, "we're yellow, but we're read, and we're true blue."⁷

One of the *Post's* early victims was the distinguished local architect, F. E. Edbrooke, who had designed the *News* building. Attacks on the builder began appearing under the *Post's* "So the People May Know" standing head. (The *Post* had no editorial page; it would have been excess baggage since each article in and of itself was a full statement of the paper's passions and prejudices on the subject matter involved.) Edbrooke's office, however, was on an upper floor of the Tabor Opera House building across the street, and it looked right down into the Bucket of Blood. Whenever Bonfils or Tammen stepped to the window he could see Edbrooke above him cleaning a rifle. The attacks ceased.

Tammen's one journalistic rule, often expounded to his reporters as he lounged on their desks, was: "Hit 'em where they live." His partner, who did no desk-lounging, was more unctuous. It was Bonfils who was responsible for the slogans which appeared on the façade of the *Post* building: "'Tis a Privilege to Live in Colorado"; "You Are Now Standing Exactly One Mile above Sea Level." (You weren't, but it was close enough.) Bon's masterpiece was: "O, Justice, When Expelled from Other Habitations, Make This Thy Dwelling Place." The noble motto won the *Post* a highly talented artist.

Wilbur Steele, the city's first newspaper cartoonist, had left the *News* and was drawing for the *Republican* at the time the open invitation was extended to the fugitive Miss Justice. He drew a cartoon of that robed lady, her blindfold pushed aggressively up from one eye, her sword aloft, storming into the *Post* building with its slogan. Two figures tagged Tam and Bon were fleeing out the rear door. Bon was asking Tam: "Who is that woman?"

The town guffawed, and Tam along with it. Bon's amusement undoubtedly was more restrained. He never saw the slightest contradiction between what his slogan said and what his *Post* did. But he knew talent when he saw it. He offered more money and hired Steele away from the *Republican*.

Meanwhile the show went on. A lady aerialist in pink tights slid, hanging by her teeth, from an upper floor of the Gas & Electric Building to a platform in front of the new *Post* building at 1544 Champa Street, occupied in 1907. A large cash prize was offered for the first non-stop airplane flight around the world. Stipulation: the flight must begin and end in Champa Street. Welton Street might have an editorial page and good intentions, but it had no two-headed calves.

The old sober-sided *News* was concerning itself with other matters. Denver's rapid growth had pushed it definitely into the rank of cities, and like many another American city, Denver entered the twentieth

⁷Fowler, *Timber Line*, p. 99.

century stewing in a vat of malodorous municipal and corporate corruption. It was the era of the muckrakers. Lincoln Steffens surveyed the situation but passed over Denver's shame to expend his crusading energies on the scarcely less spectacular vices of Chicago, Minneapolis, and New York. John Reed, Upton Sinclair, and others lifted the lid on the Denver cesspool and commented in terms which obviously were radical, rabble-rousing, and troublemaking. The plain fact was that Denver was firmly in the grip of boodlers, bribe takers, petty politicians—and fat-cat corporations which knew how to manipulate the ilk.

Reflecting the personality, interests, and political ideals of its owner, the *News* was hip deep in the jungle, hacking away at the underbrush to clear the way for its vision of a better city. Patterson's eyes were failing now under the pressures of full-time law, full-time politics, and full-time publishing. He was wearing spectacles with thick, perfectly round lenses. But good eyesight was not essential to a knowledge of what was going on in Denver. A sense of smell was sufficient.

News policies in this fragrant milieu were extremely liberal, if not red-eyed radical by present-day yardsticks. The paper came out flatly and strongly for public ownership of railroads and utilities, and indicated it could easily be persuaded that banks should be "restored to the people." The *News* was in the van of the new "progressive" movement abroad in the land, stirred up by Populism, Bryan, Eugene V. Debs, and the muckrakers. It took the side of labor at every opportunity, and Patterson was often the defense counsel when union leaders or members were brought into court on charges which boiled down to non-conformity and fighting back. An armory of editorial lances was broken against the entrenched grafters in City Hall. The utilities, big corporations, "trusts," and mineowners got nothing but trouble from the *News*. The private water company, for example, was enterprisingly slicing itself chunks of Denver's progress at the rate of 242 per cent on its investment. The *News* uncovered the statistic and let out a howl that echoed up and down Seventeenth Street from the state Capitol to Union Station.

A campaign for public ownership was pressed intensively. It succeeded. The city took over operation of the water works. *News* crusades for municipal operation of the Denver Tramway Company transit lines and the light and power utilities did not fare so well. The traction company continued in private hands, though its present owners, caught between declining revenues and inadequate service in a city where nearly everyone drives to work, now might welcome having the city take over. The Public Service Company (gas and electricity) was fair game for the *News* and all the rest of the Denver press for decades. It managed to side-step municipal ownership, but sometimes it was a narrow squeak.

The Denver Gas & Electric Company, predecessor to Public Service, was deeply embroiled in the Cities Service scandal. On one of his many

visits to Denver Henry L. Doherty ran afoul of bitter local enemies. The gas and electric company had sought a new long-term franchise in the 1906 election and won by only five hundred votes. The *News* then discovered that hundreds of ten-cent tax receipts had been issued to qualify electors in a balloting otherwise restricted to taxpayers. A cry went up, subpoenas were issued, and one of them caught the utilities king Doherty. In court he "crossed his arms and arrogantly refused to testify."⁸ Judge Ben Lindsey threw him in jail for contempt. His lawyers managed to spring him after three days and two nights, and he fled to Lincoln, Nebraska, pausing on the steps of his Pullman to issue a dictum on the climate and the ancestry of the city which maltreated him: "Denver has more sunshine and sons of bitches than any place in the country."

Some months later Doherty's right-hand man, Frank W. Freuauff, a deacon of Central Presbyterian Church, lost his pocket diary or it was stolen from him. The little book made its way to the *News*, which published facsimiles of the pages. Each page carried a biblical quotation at its head: "Suffer little children" or "Blessed are the meek." But beneath the moral sentiments were listed the "Big Mitt" payments made during the election campaign. They totaled \$67,690 to candidates and leaders of both parties. Mayor Speer was down for \$4500, the president of the Board of Supervisors got \$1600, a judge \$400, several politically active preachers \$550 each.

The bloodless City Hall War of "Bloody Bridles" Waite had pinpointed one of the weaknesses of Denver city government which left it prey to political harpies and palm-crossing trusts. Some of the municipal officers were appointed by the governor, some of them locally elected. When the two factions didn't choose to work together, which was often, city affairs bogged to a standstill. The result was an inefficient and ineffectual city government, racked with factional jealousies, sensitive to petty prerogatives, and thus divided in open invitation to those who might wish to advance private projects at the expense of public weal. There is nothing in the record to indicate that the invitation was ever spurned.

The *News* demanded for a long time a "home rule" amendment to the state constitution which would give Denver citizens full control over their city affairs. Finally, on November 4, 1902, the amendment was adopted. Denver freed herself from Arapahoe County, which dated back in name if not in boundaries to Kansas Territorial days, and became a co-extensive city and county. But when the first city charter was drawn and submitted for a vote in 1903 the "machine" went into action. The charter proposed to establish a system which would have severely restricted party spoils and made corporate domination more difficult. It was

⁸George Creel, *Rebel at Large* (New York, 1947), pp. 121-22.

defeated, and the *News* charged that more than ten thousand illegal ballots had been cast.⁹

A second charter was prepared and adopted. It multiplied elective and appointive offices, abolished the recall, made public ownership of utilities so difficult and costly it could not be resorted to, and, on a pose of taking city government out of politics, stipulated that elective offices were to be non-partisan. They immediately became, of course, bipartisan, with the full range of attendant evils and the obfuscation which made it difficult for the voter to know who or what he was voting for or to fix responsibility. Robert W. Speer, as a case in point, was nominally a Democrat. Yet he was maintained in the mayor's office for many years by a combination of Republican Seventeenth Street, neutral, but hardly disinterested corporations, the big-time gamblers like Ed Chase, small-time Democratic hacks, and the madams and proprietary pimps of the hookshops on Market Street. (Although Speer was a coreligionist in politics and a personal friend, Patterson fought him with the *News* at nearly every turn and in the face of the beatification of "Speer the Builder" by the garden-club crowd and other civic ostriches who saw only the lovely new parks and public works and dismissed city politics as a dirty business. Which it was. The *News*, for example, opposed Denver's pleasant mid-city Civic Center on the grounds, later proved, that it was primarily a real estate manipulation designed to line the pockets of Speer and his friends, and only incidentally an achievement in the march toward the City Beautiful.)

The myth of non-partisanship still haunts Denver voters. Although everyone in town knows or suspects a municipal candidate's party affiliation, both candidate and voter are legally bound to pretend they are politically unattached. As a result, mayors, city councilmen, and other elective officials establish their own individual machines, intermesh them *sub rosa* with one or both party organizations, and merrily roll along unburdened by the necessity of declaring themselves openly on party platforms or philosophies. Denver can rise up and throw the rascals out—an expedient seldom resorted to—but the bipartisan rigging makes party responsibility impossible.

Patterson and the *News*, bucking such a system from a frank and open partisan position, came into conflict with a notorious state Supreme Court. The corporations had entered into an agreement with Republican Governor James H. Peabody under which they were permitted to select the judges to be appointed to the supreme bench.¹⁰ The *News* didn't like that situation a bit. Page-one editorials and cartoons appeared in June 1905, accusing the high court of being corrupt in personnel and

⁹Clyde Lyndon King, *The History of the Government of Denver with Special Reference to Its Relations with Public Service Corporations* (Denver, 1911), pp. 233-35.

¹⁰35 *Colo.* 325.

judicial decisions. The justices were baldly proclaimed to be tools of the utility and railroad corporations and the Republican bosses. The court, said the *News*, was the "Great Judicial Slaughter-house and Mausoleum," and a cartoon depicted the chief justice as the "Lord High Executioner" beheading virtuous Democrats. It was no sniping attack. Patterson stood on top of his battlements and waved his flag, daring reprisals. In a signed editorial in the *News* he declared:

I am responsible for every one of them [the editorial attacks], and either wrote or approve of them. I believe they are fair and just criticism, and are fully warranted by what has transpired. . . . I consider the proceedings against me as a direct assault upon the freedom of the press, and I shall defend that ancient and important prerogative of free people with all my power.¹¹

The Supreme Court had picked up the gage and cited Patterson for contempt. The case became an important one in the legal history of American press freedom. Patterson, with a battery of attorneys in support, replied, in effect: "In answer to the charge of contempt for saying these things, my only answer and defense is that they are true, and I hereby offer to prove them." The brief and the arguments were intricate, lengthy, and unavailing. Two of the justices sitting in judgment on him, Patterson declared, had obtained their seats as a part of the conspiracy. In his final verbal statement to the justices, robed, frothing, and *en banc*, the *News* publisher was even more strongly contemptuous in one of the most scathing arraignments ever addressed to an American bench:

I can only say, if your honors please, that it is the most stupendous indictment that can be framed against this whole doctrine of constructive contempt; or, has it come to this in the United States, that the publisher of a newspaper, because men are judges, may not speak the truth of them as to their official actions, except at the peril of confinement in the common jail, the payment of heavy monetary penalties, or both?

. . . if this is to be maintained, it simply means that we have in each of the states of this Union a chosen body of men who may commit any crime, who may falsify justice; who may defy constitutions and spit upon laws, and yet no man dare make known the fact.

So far as I am concerned, if the court please, I am unwilling to be bound by such a system, and therefore, if no other result is to come from these proceedings beyond my own punishment, than the arousing of the public to the danger of such a power in the hands of any body of men, a great good will have been accomplished; more, perhaps, than is necessary to compensate for what I may suffer; and I only desire to say, further, before I sit down, that no matter what penalty the court may inflict, from this time forward I will devote myself—by the

¹¹*Rocky Mountain News*, June 30, 1905.

constitutional amendment, if necessary, and by the decisions of the court it has become necessary—to deprive every man and every body of men of such tyrannical power, of such unjust and dangerous prerogative, of the ability to say to publishers of newspapers: “While about everything else you may speak the truth, no matter what our offenses may be, you speak the truth with the open door of the jail staring you in the face, or the depletion of what you may possess in this world’s goods, and probably of both.”

If the court please, I am now ready to receive judgment of the court.¹²

The Colorado bar gasped. No one, ever, had called Supreme Court justices tyrants to their faces. Perhaps it is reasonable to deduce that Patterson really would have welcomed a jail sentence; it would have made his case all the stronger. But the court didn’t fall for the trap. With Justice Robert W. Steele dissenting, it fined Patterson a thousand dollars. To a man of his position and wealth, the penalty was a cowardly slap on the wrist. The United States Supreme Court refused to accept an appeal on an issue of jurisdiction.

Many years later, however, the federal high court handed down a decision¹³ which has been interpreted as sustaining Patterson’s audacious stand. The court overruled conviction of the publisher of the *Toledo News Bee* for criticizing a federal court’s decision. An attorney who now is himself a member of the Colorado Supreme Court wrote that the ruling “. . . wiped out the power of Federal courts to punish newspaper publishers and editors in contempt proceedings. . . . It indicates that the Supreme Court has sufficient stature to realize that Article 1 of the Bill of Rights should prevail in a situation where it comes into conflict with the judicial power to punish contempts. Thus a strong blow has been struck for Freedom of Expression and Thomas Patterson’s beliefs have received recognition from the highest court in the land.”¹⁴

The structure of fraud which permitted the buying of a Colorado Supreme Court rested, basically, on prosaic ward heeling and ballot-box stuffing. Votes were openly purchased. The ten-cent tax receipts have been mentioned. Another gimmick brought to a high state of perfection in Denver required adroit awkwardness. A voter suddenly would stumble and slam into the ballot box, knocking it to the floor, breaking the glass and scattering ballots. The graceless one then would apologize profusely and insist that he be permitted to help pick up the spilled ballots. In the course of the cleanup a quantity of fraudulent votes would be substituted.

In the silk-stocking precincts where such clumsy methods might have

¹²35 *Colo.* 395-99.

¹³*Nye v. U.S.*, Apr. 14, 1941.

¹⁴William E. Doyle, “Patterson Vindicated,” *Dicta*, Vol. 18, No. 7 (July 1941), pp. 169-72.

been challenged, heelers canvassed the poll books carefully and made lists of the names of all voters who had recently died or moved. Professional voters then were employed to circulate between polling places and vote the names. Some of them were men of ready wit, equal to any emergency. Ed Keating recalls one who carried off an uncomfortable situation rather well. He was challenged and asked to repeat his name. He complied.

"My God!" said a woman waiting in line. "That's my husband's name."

"Madame," the con man replied instantly, "do not attempt to convince our friends that you are my wife."

He cast his phony ballot and stalked from the polls.¹⁵

One of the most devoted enemies of "Big Mitt" and his system was the undersized, argumentative gadfly Judge Benjamin Barr Lindsey. Close to fanatic in his crusading zeal for the underdog, Lindsey as a county judge became convinced something was wrong in the way the law handled juvenile offenders. He wanted a justice for children which would be "medicinal and restorative" rather than based on society's revenge against wrongdoing. He began hearing children's cases in that light and finally, in 1907, persuaded the legislature to establish for him the first juvenile court. National and world fame as a reformer and pioneer came to him. The irascible George Bernard Shaw once waited patiently for several hours in a London hotel lobby in order to shake Judge Lindsey's hand. But in Denver Lindsey was without honor.

His convictions that "there's no such thing as a bad boy", that environment counted more than heredity in shaping a young criminal, led him to inquire with terrier intensity into the backgrounds of the boys and girls who came before him. Economic and industrial abuses were the most common root cause, he announced, and these were being sustained by the corporate corruption of politics. Henceforth Ben Lindsey was the most active and shrill of Denver's unpopular reformers. He fought at the top of his voice and with every weapon he could reach, and he was both able politician and resourceful lawyer. He had the *News* as his ally through much of the battle. "The Beast"—as Lindsey called the machine—paid him back with personal vilification, slanders about his sex life, and threats of physical violence. The corporations boycotted the *News*. The paper lived through the disfavor of its major advertisers, but the machine got Lindsey. The vocal little man was often a bore and always a baiter of consciences, and so Denver ran him out of town as an undesirable citizen. The bar association, dominated by lawyers who had felt his lash, shut Lindsey off by disbaring him on a charge that had been previously aired and disproved. He left Denver and died in Los Angeles.¹⁶

¹⁵*Rocky Mountain News*, Aug. 10, 1955.

¹⁶Lindsey tells of his Denver years in *The Beast* (New York, 1911) and *The Dangerous Life* (New York, 1931).

During much of the wrestling with Lindsey's "Beast", the *Times* was on the other side of the fence from its onetime sister paper, the *News*. Patterson sold, or leased, the *Times* to Mayor Speer and William G. Evans, banker, president of the tramway company, and son of territorial Governor John Evans, and thereby spawned a foe. The *Times* joined the *Republican* in speaking for the corporations and attacking the do-goodism and wild-eyed Democratic socialism of the *News*. Later Evans turned the paper back to Patterson, who restored the *News-Times* morning and evening combination. The *Post* was the journalistic mercenary of the wars, shifting back and forth as fortunes changed and influential callers came visiting at the Bucket of Blood.

The *Post's* major contribution to trust busting was to set up a coalyard. Bonfils decided the "coal trust" was exacting toll from the people of his city, and he now had adopted the slogan of "Big Brother" for his paper. Big Brother would not permit this exploitation to continue. So the *Post* interrupted its parade of human flies and lady wrestlers and began selling coal. The advertisements said: "A Full Ton—and an Extra Lump." One ungrateful beneficiary of this public-spirited gesture suspiciously ran his load of coal across the city scales. He discovered the extra lump was missing, along with several others. Additional loads were weighed and found similarly short. The *News*, of course, chortled its glee all over the front page, and for a time Tam and Bon became "Nut" and "Lump" to *News* cartoonists and editorial writers.

One of the leading *News* editorialists of the day, a key broadswordsmen in the thin but determined little phalanx, was George Creel, later to become a noted magazine writer, militant liberal, and Woodrow Wilson's public information chief in World War I. Creel hit Denver young, filled with outrage against life's injustices and red hot for anything whatsoever that looked like a holy war. He was swept up by the heady righteousness of Judge Lindsey's many causes and became one of the most aggressive lieutenants of the "Kids' Judge."

Creel started with the *Post*. He departed from Champa Street with wry comments on Bonfils' penuriousness and backward-hurled accusations of welshing and double cross. Years later in his autobiography Creel wrote that "Bonfils made me see avarice as a passion that gave more sheer pleasure than the love of women or the applause of men. Saving a nickel actually bathed him in happiness and content." This reminiscent outburst had its origins in a trip Creel made with Bonfils to Egypt.

Bonfils admired the phraseology very much when one of his writers described him as "friend of Presidents." He decided forthwith to carry a personal invitation to Teddy Roosevelt, urging him to visit Denver, "Climate Capital of the World." T.R. at this point was hunting on the upper reaches of the White Nile; but the whole tour could be charged off to editorial enterprise and promotion. Creel was assigned to go along

and handle writing and reporting chores. The trip was nauseous for Creel. The millionaire publisher embarrassed his sixty-dollar-a-week writer by giving the railroad porter a quarter for three days of service. The police in Naples had to rescue them from angry porters in a similar tipping set-to. Creel flatly refused his employer's proposal that they share a Pullman berth to reduce expenses, and he finally got a separate hotel room in Paris by jumping on Bon's stomach in the middle of the night "with a yell that rattled the windows."

"Nightmare," he explained. "Thought I was over them, but I reckon they're coming back."

Bonfils okayed less cozy quarters, but the cost preyed upon him for the rest of the trip and he became petulant and quarrelsome. When the safari returned to Denver, Creel was assessed half the expenses and the sum was deducted on the installment plan from his pay check. Still later, after Creel had joined the *News* staff and was lambasting the *Post's* attitude on civic reform, a "So the People May Know" memo appeared insinuating that five hundred dollars of the expense money had been stolen, though "The *Post* forgot all about it." Creel frothed in the *News* for February 3, 1913: "Mark the *Post's* royal disregard of money. . . . 'The money was never returned, and the *Post* forgot all about it.' What is one thousand dollars to the *Post*? A bagatelle! a trifle! Does it not offer million-dollar rewards for the first humming bird that flies over Pike's Peak? for the first trip to Mars? . . . There is an impudence so sublime that it is almost enchanting! Who does not know that money is the heart's blood of these men? Why, until every cent of the lost money was repaid them, they never knew rest, nor did I know peace."

Creel had left Denver for a semester on the staff of *Cosmopolitan* magazine before Patterson lured him back to Denver and the *News* in 1911 with the promise of a free hand in a slam-bang campaign to clean up the city. The young sin slayer, who lived in a cosmos of black and white, was in glory as he buckled on his armor and plunged in. He organized a task force headed by Judge Lindsey. Also in the group were Edward P. Costigan, later a United States senator, and Josephine Roche, a wealthy mineowner's daughter fresh out of Vassar with a heartful of dedication and a headful of liberal ideas. To assist in firing the rhetorical salvos Creel signed up a *News* writer, William MacLeod Raine, who, when his hour of crusading was done, would set down and write nearly fourscore shoot-'em-up novels about the Old West. Raine died in Denver in 1954 wearing the ten-gallon mortarboard of "dean of the Westerns."

The first objective was to get Mayor Speer. Creel describes the fray:

The *News*, of course, was the spearhead of the movement; and in addition to heated editorials, I filled the front page with attacks and appeals. The corporations, fighting back, ordered an advertising boycott, but while it made a sizable dent in revenues, Senator Patterson stayed

put. The churches were also scared into opposition by rich parishoners, and only Father O'Ryan and Rabbi Kauvar, two dauntless souls, gave us pulpit support. Speer's board of education refused us the use of the schoolhouses, but we topped that hurdle by asking the people to open their homes, and neighborhood meetings proved most effective.¹⁷

At one point twenty-five thousand persons turned out to listen to firebrand speeches for three hours in a snowstorm. With this sort of support the reformers accomplished the unlikely. They whipped the Speer machine in 1912 and installed Henry J. Arnold as mayor—for one tempestuous term. The forces of right were jubilant, and the *News* crowed. But Tom Patterson, now in his seventies, was an old campaigner and wise to the ways of small men in large offices. He forecast that their man wouldn't remain hitched. Creel was detailed to take the post of police commissioner and keep his eye on the reform mayor.

Patterson was right. Both "Big Mitt" and Champa Street got to Arnold, and he went sour. Not, however, before Creel had a chance to get in some licks. He turned the police department inside out, and one of his first orders deprived patrolmen of their nightsticks. They would go unarmed "like the London Bobbies." The *Post* denounced the commissioner as a "tramp anarchist" and a "crackpot" and forecast that Denver's underworld would make mincemeat of the defenseless cops. Creel cited statistics to show that during the first ten months of the "clubless" period two policemen were beat up while twelve had been killed in melees **before** his order.

The *News* had forced Governor Henry A. Buchtel to shut down open gambling in 1907. There remained the street of sin, gaudy Market Street, the West's most wicked thoroughfare. Creel turned his attentions to the red lights. Denver had some seven hundred prostitutes plying their trade, and the police commissioner theorized that they were the victims of white slavers and male degradation. They could be reclaimed for virtue, he felt sure, by rounding them up and putting them in an atmosphere of Grade A milk and fresh air on a municipal farm. Abolishing vice also would cut down on the spread of venereal disease. This was the one time Patterson bucked. He approved of his headstrong moralist's efforts to close the parlor houses and cribs, but he didn't feel the words "syphilis" and "gonorrhea" belonged in the pages of his family newspaper. Creel argued. Finally Patterson gave in, but only on condition that he would not have to read a word of what Creel wrote about the menace of social disease.

Creel cracked down on the Tenderloin in 1913. He herded in the doves, gave them Wassermanns, and forced the tainted ones—about two thirds—to submit to treatment. The girls were entertaining nightly ten to twenty-five clients apiece, and it perhaps can be assumed that they

¹⁷Creel, op. cit., p. 97.

enjoyed the peace and quiet on Creel's health farm. But only temporarily. Creel was bounced out of office, and within a few months Market Street was humming as busily as ever with all the favorites back in business at the same old stands. Two years later, after prohibition had been voted in 1914, Sheriff Glen Duffield was more successful. He succeeded in closing down the district and scattering its courtesans to walk-up hotels and well-publicized telephone numbers. Scandalous Market Street was gone. Mattie Silks' palace of love at number 1942 eventually became, by substitution of a couple of letters, a warehouse. Denver never again could boast of a sin belt. There were still accommodations, of course, but they were scattered to dingy fleabags, and the oldest profession lost much of its glamor. For a time the "maid system" was instituted. Each rooming house was permitted not to exceed two maids on duty at any one time to change the hot sheets and otherwise minister to guests. John Polly, a *News* writer of a later era, scored a memorable scoop in the late 1930s when a minor fire broke out in one of the sleazy budgeted brothels. Polly started his story: "There hadn't been so much excitement at the Silver Dollar Rooms since a lost stranger came in and tried to rent a room. . . ." But it was the last fling of a ribald tradition. When Denver became a military town in the build-up for World War II, the army forced Mayor Benjamin F. Stapleton to banish even the "maids." No health farm was provided.

As scarlet pleasures fled before the lashes of Creel and Sheriff Duffield, man's indomitable inventiveness was providing Denver with other diversions. The automobile and the airplane were making their appearance.

A dashing young *News* photographer in a bowler hat was startling the town by driving up to assignments, clouded in dust and wreathed in explosions, at the wheel of a two-cylinder Maxwell runabout. The photographer was Harry Mellon Rhoads, and the car was one of the first in Denver. Harry got his start at seven dollars a week—a five-dollar gold piece and two silver cartwheels—on the *Republican* in 1900. He was eighteen then, and he covered his first photo assignments by bicycle and motorcycle. Four years later he joined the *News* and acquired his racy \$750 Maxwell. Today, a portly and puckish little man who sometimes sports the latest in flat-topped hats, Harry is still handling daily picture assignments for the *News* and probably has a longer record of service than any other news photographer in America. He likes to drive young reporters past the corner of Forest Drive and Broadway to point out Denver's first service station, lately rebuilt but still doing business at the original location. Both of Harry's daughters and a son-in-law have also been *News* photographers. They are no longer on the darkroom staff, but Harry, ageless and elaborately courtly with the ladies, goes on forever. He angrily resents any effort of city editors to shield him from the more rigorous assignments.

Harry's camera remembers the first automobile on Denver streets, David W. Brunton's Columbia electric, which created a sensation when it appeared May 10, 1898.¹⁸ On September 9, 1900, the *News* reported that John Brisben Walker had driven to an altitude of 11,000 feet on Pike's Peak. It was the highest an automobile had gone, although the summit of the peak was reached on August 12, 1901, by W. B. Felker and C. A. Yont. Present-day tourists drive to the top on a modern highway.

One of the first internal-combustion cars to reach Denver was purchased by Dr. F. L. Bartlett of Cañon City. It was shipped from Detroit to Denver by express and arrived in the summer of 1901. The *News* described it as the thirteenth Oldsmobile manufactured. The car was assembled, and Dr. Bartlett practiced driving in a sixty-acre field "back of the smelter." Then he set out cross country for Cañon City. The machine met a woman in a horse and buggy. The horse took fright and upset the buggy. Dr. Bartlett had to pay damages for terrorizing the countryside.

The *News* of January 15, 1902, recorded another milestone: "For the first time in the history of Denver an automobilist was fined in police court yesterday for driving his machine along the streets of the city at a speed which endangered the lives of pedestrians." E. S. Matheson was the goggled prisoner at the bar. Officer Asken testified that he arrested Matheson on Sixteenth Street. The culprit had been doing forty miles an hour. The automobilist demurred. Eight miles an hour. "Twenty-five dollars and costs," said the judge.

Harry Rhoads still preserves the glass-plate negatives he made on July 20, 1903, when the first automobile to cross the continent through Colorado visited Denver, six months out of San Francisco eastbound. It was a twelve-horsepower, one-cylinder Packard named "Old Pacific" and manned by E. T. Fetch and M. C. Karup. Somehow they had pushed their horseless carriage up the gorge from Grand Junction to Glenwood Springs and then over the Continental Divide to Denver.

The air age arrived in Denver close behind the automobile age. Harry Rhoads was at Overland Park race track with his camera on February 2, 1910, when Louis Paulhan, pioneering French aeronaut, undertook to demonstrate his flying machine to a skeptical West. The first American air show had been held in Los Angeles only two weeks before. Paulhan brought his Farman biplane to Denver in a boxcar, and there was much tinkering and French profanity through the day in the racetrack oval as the flimsy linen-covered plane was assembled and tested. Several trial runs were unsuccessful, and half the chilled crowd of thousands drifted away convinced the airplane was a hoax. Rhoads stayed on, and at dusk he got his picture for the *News*: Paulhan airborne ten feet above

¹⁸*Colorado Magazine*, Vol. VIII, No. 1 (Jan. 1931), pp. 4ff.

the racetrack on the first flight into Colorado's skies. Next day Paulhan cracked up trying to duplicate his feat, but he walked away unhurt and on April 27 won the London *Daily Mail's* \$50,000 prize for covering 183 miles in twenty-four hours—London to Manchester.

Denver's first aircraft passenger, other than professional aviators, was a *Rocky Mountain News* reporter, Harvey V. Duell, future editor of *Liberty* magazine. To get a "birdman" feature story for the paper, Duell was flown for fifteen minutes—sixteen miles at an altitude of three hundred feet—on March 1, 1914, in a locally designed Wagner Biplane.

The first year of Denver aviation cost the life of one of America's earliest airmen. Ralph Johnstone, Walter Brookins, and Arch Hoxsey, who had learned their flying from the Wright brothers, brought three of the Wright planes to Denver in November. Johnstone was fresh from his October 31 triumph of setting a new altitude record of 9714 feet at Belmont Park, New York. In Denver, Johnstone's ship plunged nose down from 800 feet above Overland Park and he died in the tangle of struts and guy wires. It was America's second aviation death.

Strangely, Denver raised no monument to the courageous Johnstone, one of the handful of daring young men who blazed the sky trails. The oversight is strange because Denver, as much as any city, takes pride in historical markers and monuments to trail blazers. One of the most striking acts of civic commemoration is the Pioneer Monument, which stands in a plot of green at the busy intersection of Colfax Avenue and Broadway adjacent to Civic Center. It is a fountain and statuary group surmounted by a heroic-scale figure of a frontiersman on horseback beckoning the way west. The figure represents Kit Carson.

The bronze immortal might have been an Indian had it not been for a young *News* reporter named Al Runyon, later to become somewhat well known among guys and dolls of a distant city as Damon. An atavistic distaste for the savage redskin lingered in the Denver ethos well into the twentieth century, and prejudices against hair-lifters were still very much alive when Al Runyon was writing feature stories, sports, and Kiplingesque verse for the *News* in the first decade of the new epoch. Ed Keating was his managing editor. Al called him "Uncle Ed."

Keating tells the story of how Runyon changed the monument to Colorado pioneers. A drawing of the proposed statuary had been submitted to the *News*. At the top was an Indian in full regalia clutching the hackamore of his wild pinto. Around the base of the fountain "crouched men and women representing the sturdy pioneers who so gallantly fought their way across the plains," Keating remembers. The city room was outraged at this substitution of values. It was like honoring a Hun in Rome.

"I tell you what," Runyon suggested. "Give me this drawing and I'll take it up to the Brown Palace and show it to Captain Jack Howland. He'll have a fit and we'll have a great story."

Captain Jack was a self-taught painter whose considerable talents were greatly exalted in Denver's eyes by the fact that he was also a pioneer, a Union Army veteran, and an Indian fighter who had ranged from the plains of Oklahoma to the Canadian border. He hung around the lobby of the Brown and displayed his canvases of old-West scenes to upper-bracket tourists. (Those who bought made good investments; Howland paintings now command collector's prices.)

"When Captain Jack saw the drawing, he was so outraged he was tempted to reach for his 'shooting irons,'" Keating recalls. "But he restrained his wrath and gave Runyon an interview. It was as hot as we had hoped it would be. We plastered it on the front page."

The sculptor, Frederick MacMonnies, didn't stand a chance in the face of such opposition from the grand cham of local aesthetics. He hauled down the Indian and elevated Kit.

Alfred Damon Runyon came back to Colorado after Philippine service in the Spanish-American War with a determination to get ahead in the newspaper business and a deep conviction that he could do it. His father had been a printer for the papers in Pueblo, where the barefoot, motherless Al sometimes slept under the cases while his happy-go-lucky parent set type. He acquired an early exposure to the pleasures and pitfalls of newspapering. But along with a lifetime affection for the bugle call, "To the Colors," young Al brought back from the war another soldierly taste. He returned to Denver a two-fisted tosspot, and he had no talent for the sport. His bats were brutal and compulsive. They came into collision with his ambition. He had started on the *Post*, where the verdict was that he couldn't write even when sober. The notice of dismissal was unequivocal: he was tossed bodily into the street.

A witness to the ejection, however, was a pretty little thing named Ellen Egan, and she took pity on the bleary-eyed reporter. Ellen was society editor of the *News*. She persuaded her bosses to take on the then unpromising Al. It turned out to be an inspired decision, allowing for certain lapses, when other staffers were required to fill in. Runyon not only averted civic tragedy in the matter of the monument but he also delighted the city with his jingling verses and kept it laughing with an endless variety of stunts. Time would come when the *Post* would reconsider its harsh judgment and lure Runyon back with more money.

Martin Dunn, the veteran New York Hearst executive now retired to Hartsdale, was a contemporary of Runyon's Denver days, and they formed a lasting friendship. He remembers the young Runyon as a man of medium size and a "neat dresser."

"He was the silent sort," Dunn writes, "a good listener, friendly and courteous, but rationed himself on gabbing. In spite of that, he was well liked by other newspapermen. He was one of the most capable reporters on the *Rocky Mountain News* in the early 1900s. At first he did general assignments. Later he became interested in writing sports stories. He

had a streak of humor in some of his stories. Not the slapdash type of humor, but touches that gave you a chuckle.

"At that time he had not muscled into a seat on the waterwagon. Sometimes in the middle of a running story he would get himself plastered. That happened on one occasion when he was doing a stunt for the *News*. He and 'Doc Bird' Finch, the cartoonist, were giving the town a laugh and arousing a great deal of interest with their exploit. And just like that, bango, Runyon hit the bottle too hard. Someone else pinch-hit on the yarn and didn't do so well."

Even then Runyon was serious about his writing, Dunn recalls. He "frequently would make a half-dozen false starts with the opening paragraph of his stories. When he got that to please him, the story went fast. He didn't use many fingers, but was a quick enough typist. From the beginning he had dreams of being a fictionist, and was writing short stories and trying them on the magazines. They were of a different type than those he wrote later about Broadway characters. No one could have foreseen the success that awaited him."

Damon Runyon, Jr., has in his recent memoir, *Father's Footsteps*, a letter from his father which also mentions the capers with Frank J. ("Doc Bird") Finch, who took his name from a gangling little spectacle-wearing bird with which he signed his cartoons. Runyon wrote his son:

I don't want to brag, but I was the greatest newspaper stunt man of my time, not only in executing stunts but devising them. . . .

I used to travel all over Colorado with a sketch artist named Finch doing a feature called "Me and Mr. Finch," covering fairs and festivals and church sociables and everything that brought as many as forty persons together anywhere. I did the writing and Finch the illustrating, but on the side Finch would give public chalk talks and I would lecture.

It was a stunt in which Finch as "Doc Bird" (his cartoon character) met me as Santa Claus, at the Union Depot in Denver one Christmas week with a band and attended by a zillion children, that caused the *Post* to hire us away from the *News*. . . .

I refereed prize fights, a practice that Gene Fowler, who was more or less my successor, continued. I went up in a balloon. I slept in flophouses as a hobo for color for a story. I did a hundred and one similar stunts and had a lot of fun doing them. . . .¹⁹

Damon, Jr., notes that he could always date the era of his father's friends by the name they used for him. If they called him "Damon", they were Broadway characters or New York newspapermen. Those who called him "Al" knew him in Denver.

Apparently one person in Denver caught a glimmer of Runyon's future glory. Ellen Egan's pity merged into affection, and then she fell in love with the difficult young man who pursued her with constant promises

¹⁹Damon Runyon, Jr., *Father's Footsteps* (New York, 1953), pp. 116-17.

of reform. Finally she agreed to marry him if he would quit drinking. Runyon decided it couldn't be done in Denver among hale companions of his salad years, but he wanted to move on and up anyway. Between Ellen and the drive to success the reform was accomplished. They were married and moved to New York in 1910, and Runyon forswore the bottled demon for the rest of his life. It was said that he could drink more coffee than anyone else who hung around Lindy's. "Loss of his patronage was felt by the distillers," Dunn comments.

Dunn also left Denver in 1910. Like Gene Fowler, he was born on the West Side along Mullen's Mill Ditch. He remembers the *News* of his boyhood as "the best newspaper in the Rocky Mountain region" and goes on:

It was a supplement to my education. Not only did it print the news of the day, but also features. At one time it ran a series of educational value, taking up scientific and other subjects. One of them was about the humorists of America. Mark Twain and others. It also gave a prize of several thousand dollars for the best novel by a new writer.

Along about 1890, the Rocky Mountain News was located at the southeast corner of Lawrence and 17th Street. Senator Patterson sometimes was on view to the passersby. Many times I saw him standing up, looking through that day's edition of his paper.

He was of good height, with a slight tendency to corpulence. An oddity was his hair. On the upper part of his head it was black; the lower part white. Looked as if he were wearing a black wig. But there was a lot of brain under his neatly combed hairs.

Senator Patterson was not what is known as a retiring man. He did not hesitate to run a column of his own. It was named "Between You and Me." He chatted away with the reader on any subjects that were on his mind, mostly things of immediate interest. Arthur Brisbane, years later, did a somewhat similar thing in the Hearst newspapers.

In a town where bright lawyers were stumbling over one another, Senator Patterson was in the forefront of the legal procession. His law firm usually defended any labor union officials who got into tangles with the law. Sometimes there were bits of violence that the law blamed on the unions. Patterson was always for the defense. . . .

Denver was quite a colorful town then. Many of the old pioneers were still alive. Big figures of the history-making years were active.

Walter S. Cheesman, a tall, big-chested fellow, owned the Denver water system. He was a great buyer of Denver real estate. Bought a chunk of land extending from Broadway to Lincoln avenue at Colfax avenue, now facing the Civic Center. As the years went by he put up a row of one-story taxpayers, but left several vacant lots at Lincoln. There was tethered Cheesman's cow, on one of the most valuable pieces of pasture land in the area. Every newly-arrived reporter would not be happy until he wrote a feature story about Cheesman's cow. . . .

Buffalo Bill Cody was followed in the streets by children, who liked the handsome old showman. His broad sombrero, white goatee and mustache, longish hair and high-heeled boots set him apart as something special. He used to put up at the old St. James Hotel, which I believe was on Curtis street between 15th and 16th. . . .

The red light district prospered. It was on Market street, extending north from 18th about five blocks. It boasted women of many nations, including Chinese and Japanese. Their cribs attracted sightseers, men and women, who wonderingly looked into the lighted brothels. At about that time there were three murders in the district, and residents of the cribs were in a state of terror. One after another, in a period of several months, three French women were strangled. No clue was left by the slayer or slayers, and the cases were unsolved.

Dunn broke into the newspaper business in 1900 and for ten years was a reporter, alternating between Patterson's evening *Times* and the *Post*, "depending on which paper offered me the most money." In New York he became city editor and Sunday editor of the *American* and *Journal-American*.

The shuttle between papers in Denver was standard procedure for the newsmen of the day. Salaries were low, and an offer of a couple of bucks more was always sufficient to overcome any institutional loyalties which inadvertently might have developed. Runyon went to New York at the princely stipend of sixty-five dollars a week. Frank Plumb once wrote about the difficulties reporters of the day had in maintaining their nourishment:

These foot soldiers of journalism found it easy to keep the poundage down. Salaries of \$25 or \$30 for the best, \$5 to \$20 for the less skilled, insured that they would not overeat. Covering assignments on Shank's mare gave sufficient exercise to burn up any adipose matter that might result from covering a banquet or a union picnic.

These lads spent only a minor fraction of their meager emolument on food, anyway. Their motto was: "Save your money to buy whisky." Damon Runyon epitomized their customs in a feature story about the wisest way to spend one's last two-bit piece.

If, he said, one found one's self with a lone quarter-dollar after a night in the Press Club poker game, it was advisable to spend 15 cents for a glass of whisky, a nickel for a sack of Bull Durham with cigaret papers, and five cents for coffee-and-rolls, or doughnuts.

Of course, reporters did eat in those days. But there was one paper whose employes were supposed to subsist on chameleon's airy fare. I won't name this one, because Scripps-Howard might not like it.

But there was a folk-story around 1910 to the effect that a reporter was sent to the hospital with a mysterious ailment. He was X-rayed, and the radiologist reported to the M.D.:

"This is clearly a case of prolonged starvation. There isn't a trace of food in the stomach or anywhere along the digestive tract."

"That doesn't mean a thing; the condition is normal for this patient," the M.D. soothed. "This lad is a reporter for the (deleted)." ²⁰

Plumb was referring to the Denver *Express*, which came into the picture in 1906 to give the city a fifth daily paper. The *Express* was founded by the Scripps-McRae League, which in the same year started the Pueblo *Sun* to give labor a voice in the growing southern Colorado industrial city. The Denver Scripps paper was a threadbare, pugnacious, and brave little six-day sheet that eked out a hand-to-mouth existence for twenty years on its courage and the give-'em-hell liberal tradition of E. W. Scripps, who boasted that he never bought or sold a newspaper. He founded papers from scratch, and knocked them on the head when they failed to make their way. The Pueblo *Sun* expired in that wise; the *Express* lives on through merger with the *News*. Such support as the *Express* had came from labor and the progressives. Like Patterson's *News*, the Scripps paper joined cause with the early labor movement in Colorado, and it was the only one of the four Denver papers with spunk enough to expose the Ku Klux Klan when it began running Colorado in the mid-twenties. It fought the tramway corporation, supported LaFollette in 1924, and if it was not highly popular on Capitol Hill, it could claim ninety-five per cent coverage of the houses in Globeville, a workingman's neighborhood. The ornaments of the *Express'* slender staff included Robert L. Chase, now associate editor of the *News*, Walden Sweet, George Burns, Jack Carberry, Georgia Hanfelder, Sam Nadler, Arch Northway, Charles H. Newell, who was editor from 1913 to 1916, and Edward T. Leech, who took over from Newell and later became editor of the Pittsburgh *Press*.

It was a time of notable newsmen and women in Denver. Al Runyon and Martin Dunn would go on to New York. Gene Fowler was coming up on the *Republican* under city editor James R. Noland, whose son, a Colorado district judge, firmly refuses election as governor. Ed Keating would go to Congress. Ellsworth Shawn, father of the dancer Ted Shawn, was a *Times* editorial writer. A gangling youngster down from the gold camp of Victor, Lowell Thomas, spent a year on the *News* staff, 1912-13, to help put himself through the University of Denver. William MacLeod Raine and George L. Knapp were preparing to write novels, and George Creel was working up the head of steam which would carry him into the front rank of latter-day muckrakers. A stage-struck Linotype operator at the *Post*, Burns Mantle, was getting a chance to write his first theatrical reviews. Arthur Chapman was trying his wings on the *Republican* before moving uptown to become the poetic spirit of the *Times*.

Some of the lights of a star-studded era won only local fame but are

²⁰Rocky Mountain News, Nov. 29, 1954.

well remembered in Denver. Men like Wayne C. Williams, Frank Plumb, Luke J. Kavanaugh, and Herb Belford, son of the "Red Rooster," all *News* staff members. Art MacLennan and Thomas H. A. McGill, *News* city editors. John Moynihan, the quiet, ascetic *News* artist who was married briefly and unhappily to the noisy Texas Guinan. Abe Pollock, the *News* boxing "writer" whose daily column was evolved by sports department ghosts from a few pungent, ungrammatical pronouncements. The well-loved bachelor Abe, who founded a Press Club Christmas party for children, began predicting early that Jack Dempsey would be beaten, and he lived long enough to see his forecast confirmed. Joe McMeel was shuttling from the *News* to the *Republican* to the *Post* and back to the *News* as managing editor. Everyone in town knew the initials "F.W.W." At a time when leading writers were given a full page on Sunday in which to extend themselves, Frederick W. White wrote the highly popular "Page 13" feature for the *Post*. The *News* raided and captured F.W.W., a gentleman journalist of the old school, for a brief term on Welton Street. When White went back to the raucous *Post* his fellow clubmen couldn't understand the return to slumming. There was grouching at the country club until a member suggested an explanation: "There has to be one gentleman on the paper." Fowler says White was the only person in Denver of whom Bonfils stood in awe. The cultured F.W.W. discovered Burns Mantle and became an intimate of the theatrical greats of his day. He fathered four children, one of them the Colorado poetess, Lilian White Spencer. A son, Frank, later succeeded him as drama editor of the *Post*.

Distinguished newspaperwomen also came out of the lively ferment of Denver journalism in these times. Ellis Meredith (Mrs. Henry H. Clement), who had started as a proofreader for the *News*, became a noted Washington correspondent. Polly Pry (Mrs. Leonel Ross O'Bryan) once saved Bonfils' life and shielded Tammen with her voluminous skirts when a victim of the *Post's* highhandedness came calling on the Red Room and cut loose with a pistol. Both the partners were wounded, and Bonfils, who could not bear to be under obligation to anyone, never forgave Polly her good turn. She moved on to the *Times*. Helen Worden Erskine, later of the *New York World*, *World-Telegram*, and *Collier's*, also was on the *Times* staff a little later. Nell Brinkley had her easel at the *Times* and occasionally did work for the *News*. The "Brinkley girl" with her cascades of wavy hair later set a fashion in cartooning. Alice Rohe, sister of Mrs. Roy W. Howard, left the *News* staff in 1912 for the old *New York World* and subsequently became the first woman to manage a major overseas bureau for a wire service when she headed the United Press office in Rome. Her place as *News* book, music, and drama critic was taken by Hettie Cattell, who now rates as one of New York's hottest "rewrite men" on the *Mirror*. Kate Thomas Russell was society editor of the *News* for ten years prior to World War I,

covering the high-level antics of the "Sacred 36" on a bicycle in white formal gown and elbow-length gloves.

Despite the parade of talents the battle was going against the *News* and *Times*. Sober political declamations—particularly when they were of a liberal order—could not compete with the *Post's* forty-one-mile roller-skating race to Greeley. The Bonfils-Tammen Eve, clad in a few square inches of leopard skin and planted in the wilds of Rocky Mountain National Park, attracted, for some reason, more attention and comment than the *News's* Sunday page of analytical book reviews.

There is a Gresham's law in journalism, too, and it was running against Tom Patterson and his papers. Although the *News* and *Times* had never ceased crusading in behalf of the people, the people didn't seem to be much interested. They were canceling their subscriptions and switching to the *Post* in order to keep themselves fully shocked, scandalized, and outraged by the terrible things Bon and Tam came up with for each edition. Patterson, like a lot of other newspaper editors before and since, must have shaken his head a little sadly. The "best people" waited upon him in a steady procession urging his support, granted liberally, for various causes in the interest of Higher Morality. But apparently neither the best people, their relatives, nor their friends read newspapers.

Patterson was getting along in years now. He had watched the *Post's* methods, at first, with openmouthed wonder, but he was Irish and it didn't take him long to learn how to fight back. In December of 1907 the *News* published an editorial charging, as libelously and as directly as possible, that the *Post* was blackmailing advertisers. Accompanying the attack was a cartoon depicting Bonfils as Captain Kidd.

Patterson, at sixty-seven, still walked daily from his home on Capitol Hill to his newspaper office on Welton Street. Punctually on schedule on the morning of December 26 he was cutting through a vacant lot when someone came up behind him and called out, "Good morning."

The nearsighted *News* publisher turned and caught a fist on the side of his head. The blow jolted off his thick glasses. Then he was belted again and fell to the ground. His upper plate was broken, and the jagged edges cut his mouth when more blows descended upon him as he lay prone.

Patterson groped among the weeds for his glasses, and when he had put them on he recognized the man standing over him. It was the forty-six-year-old Fred Bonfils, pale with rage and cussing with a mule skinner's vocabulary.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

The Education of John Shaffer

THE SRO sign was out in Judge Thomas Carlon's court on December 29, 1907, when the handsome, athletic Bonfils appeared to answer a warrant charging him with malicious assault and common brawling in the street.

Bonfils was fined fifty dollars, and Senator Patterson's testimony gave an indication of what the *News* was up against. The audience, gleefully partisan to Patterson's cause (and undoubtedly composed entirely of *Post* subscribers in good standing), broke into cheers and applause at several points. Judge Carlon found it necessary to hammer with his gavel and warn that he would clear the courtroom if such unjudicial deportment did not cease. The crowd which filled the room and spilled into the corridors waited in eager ill will for just deserts to be handed out to the man whose newspaper was universally deplored and uniformly read.

After an attempt to withhold the names of victims to shield them, he said, from reprisals, Patterson gave chapter and verse on the buccaneering which was bleeding his papers white. Bonfils' attorney, John T. Bottom, witlessly led the *News* publisher into the recital of *Post* black-mailing and strong-arm tactics in an effort to prove that Patterson was an enemy of the haughty Corsican and thus entitled to a clobbering in the street. The theory, pushed to its logical end, would have given Bonfils license to pound on much of the adult male population of Denver.

Patterson recalled, for example, the case of Edward Monash, who had been proprietor of a once busy little department store called The Fair. Monash decided to stop advertising in the *Post* and use space in the *News* and *Times*. The *Post* immediately began a series of articles exposing alleged violations of the child labor law at The Fair and unspeakable cruelties by Monash to his young employees. The attacks ended abruptly when Monash dropped the Patterson papers and returned to the *Post*.

Then there was A. J. Spengel, furniture dealer who gave his time *pro bono publico* as chairman of the city Board of Supervisors. Spengel also rashly switched advertising media. Suddenly he found himself accused in the *Post* columns of cheating the city, violating his oath as an official, and other pleasantries. "Mr. Spengel got tired, I suppose,"

Patterson testified wryly, "and resumed his advertising in the *Post*. Since then Mr. Spengel has been nothing but a good officer and a splendid citizen."

J. S. Appel, another merchant, was charged with maltreating women after he failed to comply with orders from Champa Street to send his advertising copy in. Mention also was made of an attempt by Bonfils to muscle in for a fifty-one per cent interest in a plan to race horses at Overland Park to benefit the Colorado Industrial Association, a non-profit outfit which hoped to arrange an annual exposition of agriculture, manufacturing, and livestock with funds raised by a race meeting. When Bonfils' generous proposal was rejected the *Post* put on its clerical collar and was scandalized that Colorado industry should stoop to *gambling* to finance its progress.

Why Bottom didn't shut Patterson off is a mystery perhaps best left to legal minds, but he kept right on baiting until the *News* publisher rifled the direct challenge from his witness chair: "We never said in the paper that Mr. Bonfils has no right to sue for civil damages. If the things printed about him in the *News* and the *Times* are untrue, he could impoverish me with fines in civil cases and sell out both newspapers. . . . I don't at all seek to waive responsibility. If Mr. Bonfils sees fit to bring a suit, I will justify. . . ." (Applause, chortles, and gavel pounding.) Then Patterson turned to Bonfils, sitting at his counsel's table: "If there is anything in that article that is libelous, you can have me prosecuted for criminal libel or can bring civil suit for damages; for, if they are untrue, you have been sadly libeled, and the man who would libel another in that way deserves punishment under the law."

Bonfils made no effort to prove any untruths. He paid his fifty dollars and costs and picked up operations where he had left off.

Colonel Lucius C. Paddock, editor of the *Boulder Camera*, spoke for the press of the state:

Senator Patterson is over sixty-five years old and his assailant twenty years younger, though doubtless in a fair fight the editor of the *News* would give a good account of himself. The affair was disgraceful and calls for the severest reprobation of the press everywhere. . . . The truth is that the *Post* is daily a disgrace to journalism. Its policy is for the corruption of the morals of the state. It has raised the black flag of the buccaneer concealed beneath the folds of the American flag.

Patterson confessed publicly that he was perplexed about how to cope with *Post* methods, which combined the best techniques of trollop and highwayman. (He promptly was cartooned in the *Paper with a Heart and Soul* as "Old Perplexity.") His papers clearly were being driven to the wall. Circulation dwindled. Revenues fell. Advertisers couldn't, or wouldn't, run the risk of arousing displeasure in the Red Room by

taking space in the *News* or *Times*. Moreover, ethical niceties aside, they got more for their money, reached more people, when they put their messages in the *Post*. It was not until many years later that Denver merchants began to realize they were being victimized by a near-monopoly situation. The *Post*, flexing its muscles as one of the greatest money-makers the American press has seen, was telling them when they could advertise, how much space they would take, and (adjustably) how much they had to pay for the privilege of intruding their dry goods and living-room suites into the circus of bathing-beauty contests, kids' brass bands, and pious pilgrimages to the Mount of the Holy Cross. Bonfils perfected a sliding scale of ad rates which penalized anyone reckless or foolish enough to patronize the other papers.

Patterson was aging, but the scrappy old Irishman never once pulled a punch. He fought back, to the best of his ability, straight through to the end. The town could see that he was being beaten, and badly, but he was admired and respected. Even those who turned up their noses at his long service to wild and radical political causes paid him honor as distinguished citizen. He was welcome in homes great and small. This rankled deep on Champa Street. Tammen didn't give a damn, and said so, but Bonfils, a strange and contradictory man, wanted to be liked by the city he plundered. He regarded himself as a civic benefactor deserving of love and gratitude. No one else did. Almost friendless, he sat alone nightly in his mansion on Capitol Hill with his power and his money around him.

Larry Martin, acid and keenly talented associate editor of the *Post*, now retired, makes the point in the official history of his paper that Bonfils was born with a caul.¹ This fortuity, according to legend, endowed Bon with good luck, insight, and protection against drowning. So far as is known drowning never threatened. Luck he had in boundless measure, and a clairvoyant sensitivity to profit and loss and what would make people talk about the *Post*. He parlayed the luck and insight into great wealth and a power probably greater than that of any other man in Denver's history. Yet many wondered if Fred Bonfils found his prizes satisfying. He seldom smiled. It was said—even charged in a legal brief—that he suffered from nightmares. As time went on he became pathetically eager for approval. His bright blue eyes sometimes were clouded with loneliness and puzzlement. No one, not even Harry Tammen, was close to him. There were no confidants. When a favorite dog died Bonfils was inconsolate, and Fowler says his bodyguard, Volney T. Hoggatt, sought to comfort the grieving millionaire: “. . . but, F. G., you still have *me*.” It remained for Bonfils' devoted daughter to achieve, by graciousness and warmth, the values which he apparently found were passing him by. Generous, outgiving, sympathetic, Helen Bonfils makes friends of chance acquaintances, a skill foreign to her father's nature.

¹Martin, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

She has accomplished many philanthropies, endowing scholarships, building churches and hospitals, liberally supporting numerous charities.²

Bonfils was in many ways a baffling man: strong, disciplined, austere, yet subject to queer prejudices and saccharine sentimentalities, and capable of prodigious self-deceptions. Harry Tammen boasted that *he* was a rogue; the thought probably never crossed Bonfils' mind. To no one was this strange and powerful man more baffling than to his adversary on Welton Street. Senator Patterson knew how to handle the ordinary opponent; he had met and crossed foils with many of them, in politics, city government, the law, and newspaper publishing. The way to handle opponents was to fight them, vigorously, full-faced, and cleanly; there were rules. It required nearly twenty years for Patterson to learn that the proprietors of the *Post* had never heard of the Marquis of Queensberry, that this ruckus was catch as catch can, no holds barred and knee to the groin. How much he spent acquiring the education no one knows; Patterson did not lick his wounds publicly. Certainly he poured large sums of money into the *News* and *Times*, and though he died wealthy he would have been wealthier if Harry Tammen had not landed his sucker. Tom Patterson never found a formula for countering Bonfils and Tammen, but perhaps it was some consolation to him in the hereafter that neither of his successors did either.

Efforts of the *News* to match the *Post* style just didn't come off. Something was lacking in the way of abandon, and results were often as uncomfortable for everyone concerned as a professor of divinity at a stag party. Along about 1912, the year the weekly *News* dwindled away in its final illness, Patterson installed Henry D. Carbery as editor of the morning paper, probably with some misgivings about the modern age and a bit of the lonely feeling which must come to elderly men when they find themselves out of touch with contemporary mores. The violent-tempered Carbery was a man of lusty news appetites. His researches had led him to the conclusion that sex had proved itself and was not likely to pass out of fashion. Carbery was fond of stories with a spicing of risqué fluff to them. "Lace drawers yarns," he called them. These, he felt, would have a salutary effect on both the unambitious outlook and the diverted interest of *News* patrons, male and female. They would "stimulate our men readers and interest the women." Staff members of the period recall Carbery singing out hopefully across the newsroom to telegraph editor Jack LaHines: "Any lace drawers hanging on the telegraph lines today?"

Carbery's efforts to jazz up the staid old *News* led at one point to an ultimatum to police reporter Roy Giles, who was in a dry season and hadn't produced a sensation for more than a week. Giles was desperate. He knew Carbery meant the warning that he could look for another

²Mary Ellen and Mark Murphy, "Papa's Girl," *Saturday Evening Post* (Dec. 23, 1944), p. 14.

job if he failed to come up with a page-one exclusive. But there wasn't even a runaway horse on the blotter. He took his problem to a professional associate, "Bad News" Hawkins, who had been released that day as "cured" from the criminally insane ward at Denver General Hospital. Giles had supplied "Bad News" with used decks of cards from the Press Club during the treatment period, assigned by the courts after an unsuccessful effort to fix responsibility for a bag of stolen silverware. Hawkins listened sympathetically to his young friend's worries and comments on Carbery's origins. Then he made several low-voiced calls on the pressroom phone. An hour later he received a return call.

"Okay, Roy," he said, "your troubles are over. You've got your page-one scoop."

He instructed Giles to phone his rewrite desk that the mansion of a certain well-known millionaire had been burglarized. The thief had entered through a dining-room window, rifled the buffet of its sterling, and then opened the safe in the library, taking cash—Hawkins mentioned the sum to the decimal point—a diamond ring, a brooch, and two earrings. Giles was suspicious of a hoax but in his desperation took the plunge.

Next morning the tycoon picked up the *News* from his front porch and read about himself under a red-ink headline. He strode to the buffet. Silverware gone. He went in to his safe. Open and empty. Clamping his derby firmly over his ears, the plundered magnate marched down the hill to Senator Patterson's office on Welton Street. Two detectives were there before him. They had come to express their deep personal hurt that the *News* had not taken them into its confidence when it had knowledge of a major job. Giles was finally located in the Glenarm Turkish Baths and summoned to explain, if he could.

Giles declined to designate the wellsprings of his prescience, and Carbery backed him: "Man can't be fired for doing his duty. A newspaperman must never betray a confidence." The millionaire canceled his subscription in spite of Giles' offer to do what he could to have the swag returned. The reporter found "Bad News" in the City Hall pressroom dealing trial-run poker hands to himself. He broached the matter of restoring the valuables.

"Don't know what you're talking about, Roy," the cured burglar replied.³

Another subscription gone, and the millionaire had been an advertiser, too.

Roy Giles was the man to whom Gene Fowler took his first symptoms of newspaper illness for diagnosis. The young Gene was working as a twelve-dollar-a-week night watchman at the time but dreaming of the day when he would meet such interesting people. The preliminary

³Gene Fowler, *A Solo in Tom-Toms* (New York, 1946), pp. 271-77.

giddiness of the disease had set in, and Giles seemed to exude romance from every pore. Fowler recalls the following dialogue:

Fowler: "How did you happen to go into the newspaper business?"

Giles: "At a time when I was completely out of my head with a high fever and yellow jaundice."

F: "I'd like to get into it myself. I mean, as a reporter."

G: "God forbid! It's a harlot's life without the gaieties."

F: "Would you tell me the best person to see for a job? Maybe Mr. Carbery?"

G: "My boy, I wouldn't introduce my worst enemy to an editor. And if I had a son of my own, which is mathematically possible, I'd rather see him in Potter's Field than in a newspaper job."

F: "Then tell me why do you stay in it?"

G: "Good God of Hosts! This callow stranger asks why I stay among the pastepots and the stinking presses. Let me ask you something, my boy: Why does a galley slave stay at his oar? Why does a dope addict stay with his bottle of snow? Why does a tired husband stay with his wife? I'll tell you why: Because we're all chained to our hateful destiny."

Police reporters were a durable breed. Two of Giles' colleagues on the *News* staff were the crimson-haired John ("Red") Feeney and Paris B. Montgomery, a man who lived and died in the shadow of his own private cloud of gloom. Forbes Parkhill tells anecdotes about both of them in his robust almanac, *The Wildest of the West*.

The police pressroom was in the semibasement of old City Hall at Fourteenth and Larimer streets. It had once seen service as the city morgue, and it had a tile floor with drains. These grisly reminders of a macabre past had no effect on the hard-bitten scribes who inherited the room. In fact the facilities were more than a little utilitarian. The tile floor reduced the fire hazard among notoriously careless smokers, and an enterprising reporter of a slightly later era discovered the drain grills could be removed. Bottles of bootleg whiskey, expropriated on police raids, then could be suspended on strings down into the plumbing and kept safe from prying eyes. So much evidence disappeared in this fashion that it became routine for the Prohibition Squad to shake down the pressroom after each sally against the forces of spirituous evil. It is probably no compliment to the Denver police force of the time to record that the caches were never discovered.

The tile floor enters into Parkhill's yarn about Feeney. A suitcase full of seized marijuana leaves had been left temporarily by a trusting detective inside the pressroom door. This generated an argument about the soul-destroying and lethal qualities of the weed. A new reporter, just up from El Paso, claimed to have the word. One reefer, he asserted, merely hopped up a smoker, two turned him into a bloodthirsty savage without fear, and a few more would bring raving mania followed by



Western Collection, Denver Public Library



Goehner photo, courtesy Mrs. Lillian Goldrick Johnson

Denver's "Professor. Owen J. Goldrick: first reporter, first schoolteacher, and author of the famous account of the "Great Deluge of '64." *Above:* As he appeared during his early years in Denver. *Below:* A later portrait.



A trio of sports. The man on the left is an early vintage Gene Fowler. Center: Abe Pollock, long-time *News* boxing writer. Right: Louie Newman, *News* sports staffer and later a Detroit boxing promoter.



**THIS TABLET IS THE
PROPERTY OF THE STATE OF COLORADO**

**ON THIS SITE STOOD THE ORIGINAL HOME OF
THE ROCKY MOUNTAIN NEWS
FIRST NEWSPAPER ESTABLISHED IN
THE "PIKE'S PEAK GOLD REGION."
FOUNDED BY WELN. BYERS, APRIL 23, 1859.
CHAMPION OF LAW AND ORDER IN
"JEFFERSON TERRITORY;" ADVOCATE OF
FAITH IN EMERGING COLORADO.
LOCATED ON NEUTRAL GROUND BETWEEN
PIONEER TOWNS, DENVER AND AURARIA.
BUILDING AND PRESS LOST IN GREAT
CHERRY CREEK FLOOD, MAY 19, 1864.**

**ERECTED BY
THE STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF COLORADO
FROM
THE MRS. J. N. HALL FOUNDATION
COMMEMORATING THE 75TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE
FOUNDING OF COLORADO'S FIRST NEWSPAPER.
APRIL 23, 1934**

Salute in bronze. This historical marker stands on the present Market Street bridge in Denver, close to the site of the *News* building swept away in the "Great Deluge" of 1864.



Courtesy Grace Dailey

John L. Dailey as he appeared about the time he printed the first copy of the *News* in 1859.



John L. Dailey as a white-bearded civic leader about 1893.

Courtesy Grace Da



William N. Byers



Mrs. Elizabeth Byers



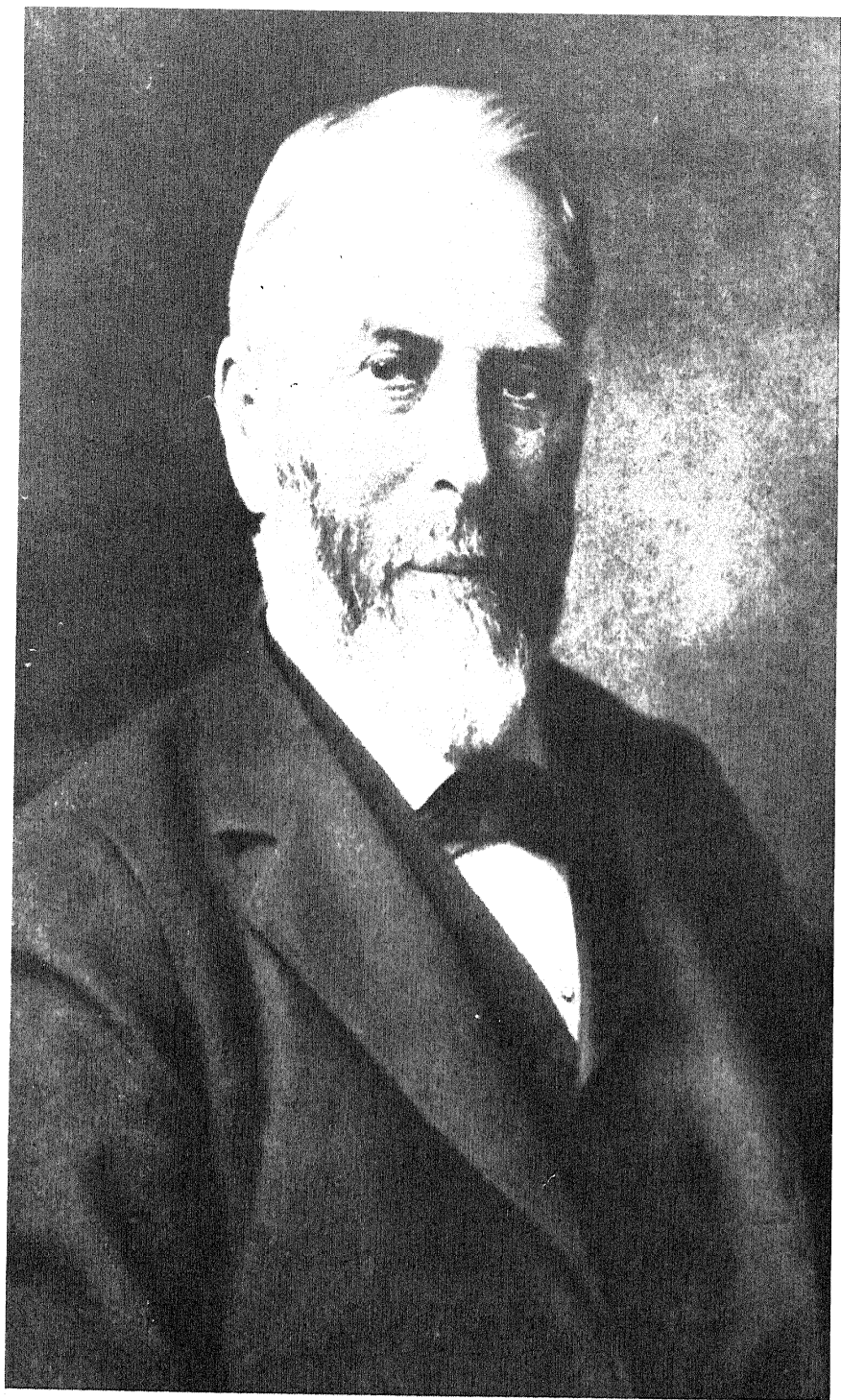
Mollie Byers



Frank Byers

Family album. The Byers family in the 1860s.

Photo of Frank from Western Collection, Denver Public Library. Other portraits from the Sim T. Sopris album, courtesy Fred M. Mazzulla.



William N. Byers, founding editor, as he appeared in later life, full of honors and influence.



Thomas M. Patterson, Congressman, Senator, and owner of the *News*, 1892-1913.



Jay Gould and W. A. H. Loveland, right, pose for a Boston photographer during one of their railroad manipulations. Photo courtesy Hobart Loveland.



Western Collection, Denver Public Library

W. A. H. Loveland, owner of the *Rocky Mountain News*, 1878-1886.



Loveland as a young man in 1863. Photo courtesy Hobart Loveland.



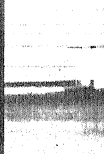
Indianapolis Star and News

John C. Shaffer, Chicago and Indianapolis financier, who owned the *News* from 1913 to 1926. A portrait made about 1937.



Robert Talkin

The Jo Davidson bust of E. W. Scripps.



Roy W. Howard as he appeared about the time he purchased the *Rocky Mountain News*.

SCRIPPS AND HOWARD



Edward T. Leech
(1927-1931)

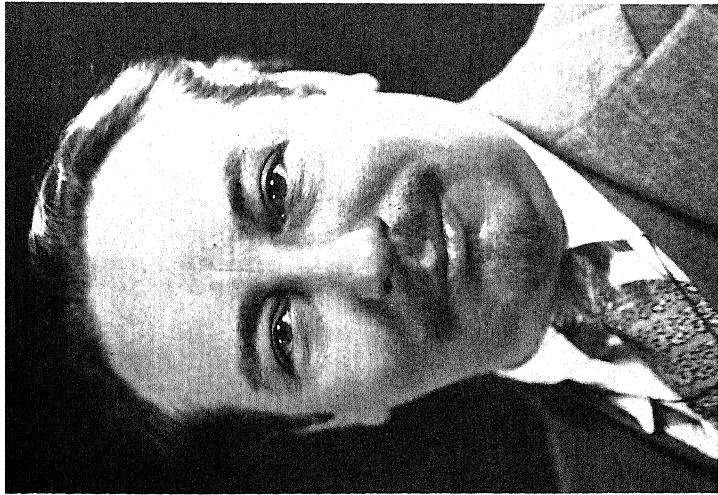


Herndon Davis

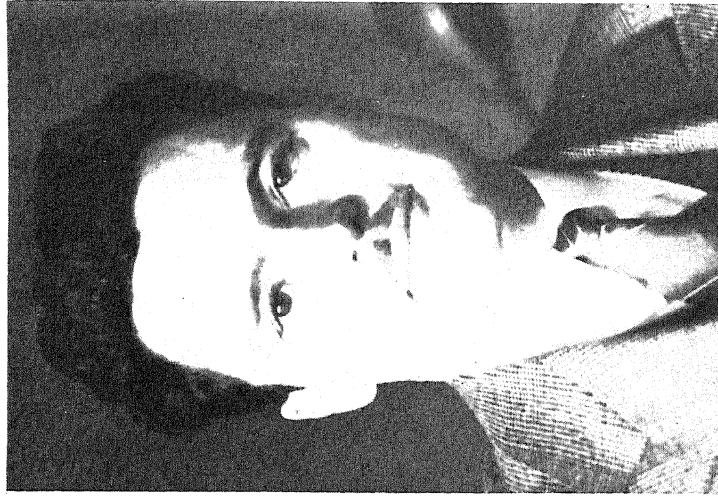
Charles E. Lounsbery
(1931-1935)



Charles B. McCabe
(1935)



Forrest Davis
(1936-1937)



Harry M. Rhoads

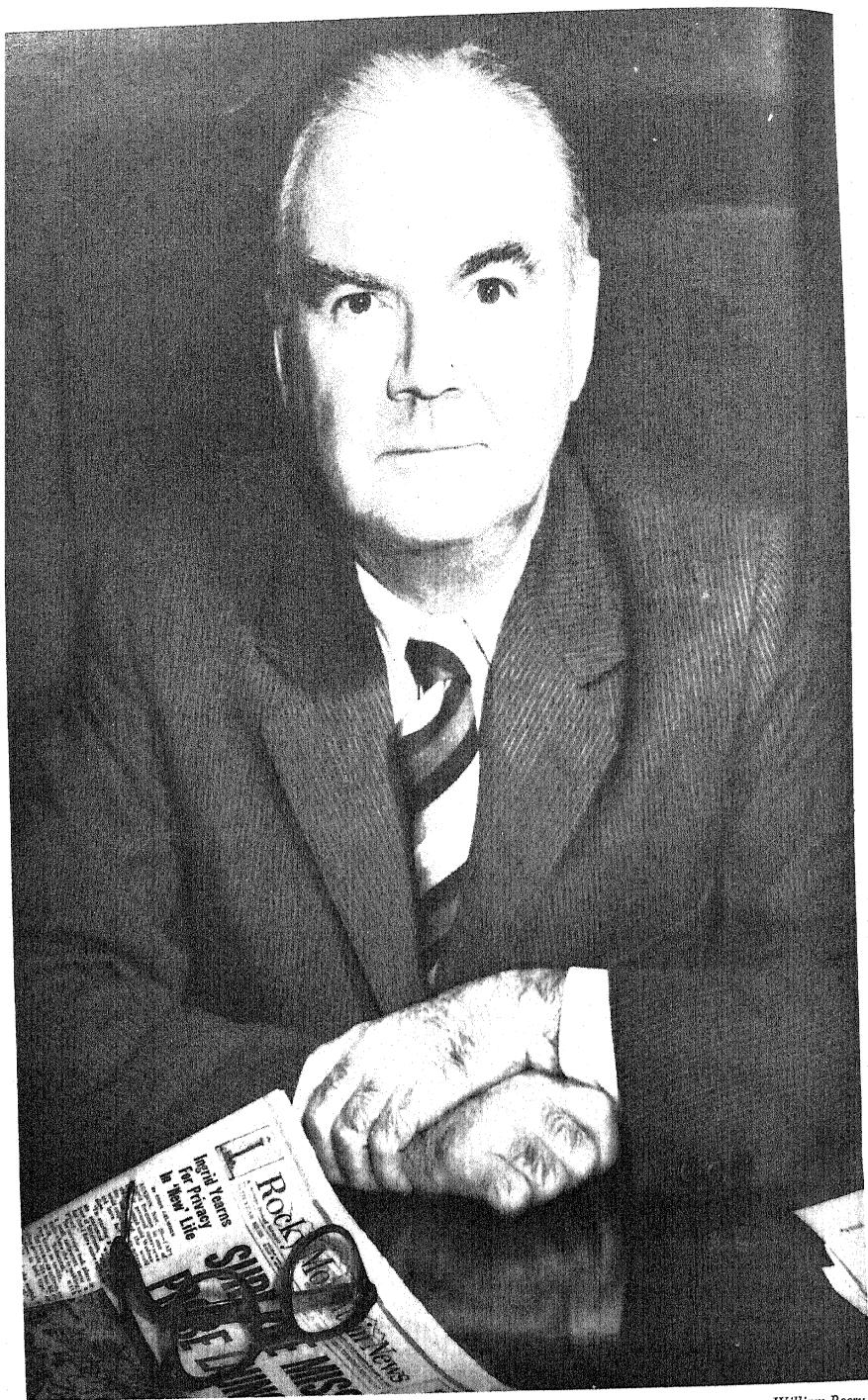
Aubrey Graves
(1937)



Gysin

(1937-1938)
Walter Morrow

A GALLERY OF EDITORS



William Peery

JACK FOSTER

Editor of the *Rocky Mountain News* since 1941.

death. There were skeptics, and the man from El Paso offered to back his statements with the dollar remaining from his pay check.

"Red" Feeney was sleeping out the argument with his feet on his typewriter. His compatriots kindled a fire of old newspapers on the tiles beside his desk and poured the bushel of cured marijuana on the blaze. Then they closed doors and windows and went outside to observe progress of their scientific experiment through the semibasement windows, like medical students in a surgical amphitheater. It was agreed by the clinicians that if Feeney went mad and died the man from El Paso won the buck.

The smoke awakened Feeney. He stamped out the fire, opened the windows, and went back to his nap. The Texas reporter never forgave him.

The story about Paris B. Montgomery is in a similarly morbid mood but ends more finally. Monty was a meticulous craftsman but subject to a bottomless melancholia. His close friend was Bill Collier of the *Post*, later the biographer of "Soapy" Smith. Each spent considerable time and effort trying to reform the other's drinking habits. Monty was not the hilarious type of drinker. Alcohol plunged him deeper into his despair, and he had frequently threatened and several times attempted suicide. So Collier was shaken and entirely unsuspecting when he received a call from the undertaking parlors a block from City Hall.

"Prepare yourself for a shock, Bill. Poor Monty has been run down and killed by a runaway. Better come over right away."

Collier braced himself at Johnny Gahan's saloon, across Fourteenth Street, and hurried to the mortuary. A tiptoeing attendant led him past several sheet-draped figures to the slab at the end of the room. The sheet was drawn back to reveal the naked Montgomery, his body paled with talcum powder. Collier bent over his friend and wept.

"It's all my fault," he sobbed. "It couldn't have happened if he'd been sober, and I could have made him quit drinking. But I didn't. I feel like a murderer."

His tears splashed on the chest of the deceased.

The salty shower tickled, and the corpse was unable to restrain a giggle. Collier snatched up a wooden mallet and pursued the nude Monty around the room, out into the alley, and up Sixteenth Street to Curtis, where the theater crowds were just leaving the Tabor Grand Opera House. A cop disarmed Collier and loaned his overcoat to the exposed and shivering Montgomery.

The presence of a mallet in an embalming room puzzled Monty and preyed upon his already somber mind. When in his cups he would mutter his bewilderment or speak sadly of the "unimportance of owning a violin" and his "terrible sorrow" over never having possessed one. Not many months after his naked sprint up Sixteenth Street, Montgomery walked into the Press Club in the Kittredge Building. For a time he

gloomily surveyed the game in which Colonel Gideon B. McFall was dealing and, as usual, acquiring the pay checks of several incorrigibly optimistic reporters, Gene Fowler among them. At last he announced that he was "tired on the inside," went over and sat down a few feet away under the polar-bear trophy on the wall, and swallowed cyanide. No one noticed until steward Jim Wong called out: "Monty got blue face!" At Colonel McFall's suggestion the chips on the table were swept up for a funeral fund.

With Fowler and the others in the game that night was a small, frail man soon to become and remain for forty years Denver's most beloved newspaper writer. Lee Casey once conceded that he was letter-perfect at pinochle, enjoyed poker except Kansas City Liz, but favored bridge as a better-mannered game. "Poker is a game of deception," he wrote; "bridge a game of information. There is no code of behavior for poker, whereas a bridge table is one of the few remaining examples of good manners." The ancient and cosmic attraction of the face-down card was a lasting problem, however. In time Casey, as one of several vice-presidents of the organization, established a Press Club house rule banning himself from the poker table. (He relaxed the rule briefly to instruct Ginger Rogers in the arts and sciences of table stakes during one of her visits to Denver.)

During his early days in the club game Casey was one of several young reporters who acquired an expensive education from the facile Colonel McFall. Lee and his crony Fowler became suspicious of the rapidity with which their slender wages were transferred from their pockets to those of McFall. They assigned Jim Wong to watch the dealer closely and notify them if he observed any indication of unfair advantage or extracurricular skills. Jim, a pillar of tradition in the Denver newspaper legend, was something more than inscrutable. "Colonel McFall plain good poker player," he reported back to the shorn lambs. "Casey and Fowler plain nuts."

Fowler has told in *A Solo in Tom-Toms* of the Big Snow of December 1913 and the Western fortitude with which its perils were borne. He, Casey, Jack Carberry, and Charles Carson became marooned by four feet of snow in the bungalow of Colonel McFall. For four days and five nights the game went on in relays while the storm carried down telephone lines and silenced the city's busy hum. At the end, when a rescue party with shovels and replacement bourbon arrived, Casey was out of pocket by two weeks' pay, but he drew himself up and squared his shoulders.

"I am exhausted but proud," he announced. "We have proved our ability to withstand the rigors of nature."

Lee Taylor Casey was born August 20, 1889, in Goshen, New York. Along with Vincent Astor and Ogden Nash, though for varied reasons and in different classes, he became an ornament on the alumni rolls of St. George's School in Newport, Rhode Island. He was a precocious

scholar and entered the University of the South at the age of fifteen. There he received the classical education in Latin, Greek, theology, history, and philosophy which marked him henceforth in print, conversation, or friendly disputation in the mellow hours. Casey was one of the kindest and gentlest of men, and those who knew him—a company which embraces both bootblack and college president—would agree there is nothing florid in the assertion that he came close to realizing Sewanee's traditional ideal for her men: "That they shall not seek their own gain, but that they shall serve their people, and shall be ever as Christ's soldiers, gentle in all things, valiant in action, and steadfast in adversity."

In 1908, Casey joined the staff of the *Kansas City Star*, and he had just completed his apprenticeship in 1911 when he was struck down in a bout with tuberculosis which permanently withered his left arm. Like many other Coloradans of the day, he was brought to Denver "on a stretcher" under sentence of death. His mother nursed him through a two-year convalescence during which he virtually committed to memory the entire text of Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*. The Romans became a spiritual kin for Casey, and he often drew on the Latin greats for his writings. Health returned to him, though he was never robust physically. Slight, erect, soft-spoken, he moved unobtrusively through the crowd and acquired a following of devoted friends as large as one of his legions.

Lee became a reporter for the *Times* in 1913 and later moved to the morning-side *News*. Except for two one-year intervals he continued on the *News* staff for the rest of his life. In 1915 he went to the *Chicago Examiner*, but his health forced a return to Denver. For a nine-month academic year in 1919-20 he was on the faculty of the University of Colorado as professor of English and journalism. The latter word he scorned as pretentious. "A journalist is simply a broken-down newspaperman," he said. As a reporter Casey covered politics and state affairs, then he became associate editor and, for two brief and personally distasteful periods, acting editor. It was his column, originally titled "By Way of Observation," for which Casey is remembered. He began writing it in 1927, and it appeared daily to the morning of his death a quarter century later.⁴

The hiring of Lee Casey was one of the last major achievements of Senator Patterson for his *News*. A long, active, and productive life was running out for the man who had engineered Colorado statehood and sent his newspapers marching under the bright, bold banners of the Populists, Bryan, and the workingman. Only three years remained to him on October 23, 1913, when he sold the *News* and *Times* and retired to his home on Pennsylvania Street. He died there July 23, 1916, at the age of seventy-five, much respected and honored, even by proper

⁴Robert L. Perkin, "Lee Casey: A Memoir with Quotes," *Colorado Quarterly*, Vol. II, No. 3 (Winter, 1954), pp. 298ff.

citizens who had once denounced him as a dangerous crackpot and radical.

Purchaser of the Patterson papers was John C. Shaffer of Chicago and Indianapolis, financier, philanthropist, patron of the arts, and one of the founders of the Chicago Opera Company. As a practicing Methodist and worker for the YMCA, Shaffer arrived in Denver with a reputation for a lofty moral code. His middle name was Charles, but the *Post* promptly made it John Clean Shaffer. This pained the cultured Chicagoan, but more than that it puzzled him. Wasn't clean what every Christian gentleman should strive to be? Why should those queer, noisy ruffians on Champa Street use the word in a hooting tone?

Three days after buying the *News-Times*, Shaffer also acquired the *Republican* from Crawford Hill, son of Senator N. P. Hill. The *Republican* was merged with the *Times*, and Denver now was back to four daily newspapers.

Shaffer was a builder of financial empires. He was already a traction magnate several times over with streetcar companies operating in Indiana, Illinois, Tennessee, and Ohio. Then he branched out into grain brokerage and speculation and once shipped a world's record load of wheat. Newspapers appear to have been an afterthought. He was profoundly uninterested in the techniques, problems, or aspirations of newspapering and apparently saw in the press only a profitable business and a power tool. For a number of years he had owned the *Chicago Post*, which was being edited by his older son Carroll, and the *Star* papers of Indianapolis, Muncie, and Terre Haute, which he called the "Star League." Shortly before he moved innocently and unsuspectingly into the Denver scene he had bought the Louisville *Herald*. The Shaffer string thus stood at seven papers as he stepped up to challenge Bonfils and Tammien. It was a mismatch, for all of Shaffer's millions.

The *Post* picked up its glibbing nickname from a speech Shaffer had made in Chicago defining his journalistic philosophies:

I consider a daily newspaper a quasi-public institution for social, educational and moral betterment. A newspaper should give its readers all the news but should discriminate between clean and unclean news; likewise between clean and unclean advertising. The news and editorial pages should reflect a clean and healthy mentality. There is plenty of clean news to make any newspaper interesting.

Not only did this clash with nearly every one of the pragmatic rules under which the *Post* was zooming to success, but some question also developed in the years ahead about whether Shaffer himself really meant it. Teapot Dome clouded the issue, for example, as did the persistent rumor which buzzed about the *News* city room that he had ordered suppression of news about a corner on the Chicago grain market.

The day after he took control of the *News-Times* the new publisher was invited to appear before the Denver Chamber of Commerce and account for his hopes and dreams. Again he placed matters on an elevated plane:

So far as my newspapers are concerned it will be our purpose to print all the news that is fit to print. We will appeal to citizenship rather than partisanship, and in all that we may do or try to do you can be assured there will be no muckraking. It is my ambition to publish newspapers that can be read in the home without offending the sanctity of the family circle or the moral sense of its readers. It will be my care to see that their columns are free from anything of an objectionable character, so that mother and daughter, sister and wife can peruse their contents with the assurance that they will not have to put it aside because of some feature or editorial that is not what it ought to be.

No lace drawers. No rocking of the boat where the utilities were concerned. Moreover Shaffer was substituting Republicanism for Patterson's Democracy in as abrupt a turnabout as Loveland's harsh abandonment of Byers' creed. This time it was the Democratic politicians who scurried about asking each other what the shift would mean.

Having paid his respect to fellow barons of commerce, Shaffer made a courtesy call on the Bucket of Blood. He found Tam in charge. Toward the end of a rather strained conversation Shaffer announced:

"Mr. Tammen, I am going to run my paper as Jesus Christ would run it."

"Why, you old son of a bitch!" boomed the irrepressible little Dutchman. "I'm going to run the *Denver Post* as George Washington would run it. Now what are you going to do about *that*?"⁵

Such uncouth language must have fallen as painful discord on the sensitive ear of the president of the Chicago Symphony Society, but it should have given him fair warning. Unfortunately, as the chief editorial writer of the *News* later observed, "neither Mr. Shaffer nor the founder of Christianity attended the editorial meetings" at which it was necessary to find ways of countering Big Brother.

Shaffer originally became interested in Denver through the frequent visits of his younger son Kent to Colorado for his health. It was generally understood that the *News-Times* property would become Kent's to operate. The health of the son never permitted him to take an active part in managing the papers, and he died in 1917. The father, however, fell under the spell of Colorado's climate and decided to make Denver his summer home. The family mansion, crammed with Shaffer's art collection, was in Evanston, Illinois. A part-time home in Denver would

⁵William L. Cheney, *So It Seemed* (New York, 1952), p. 51.

give him a chance to exercise another hobby, mountain climbing. So he bought a 12,000-acre ranch west of suburban Littleton and on it built a \$100,000 colonial country seat which he named Ken-Caryl for his sons. There he raised blooded Herefords and entertained presidents. Teddy Roosevelt was his house guest, as was William Howard Taft. Shaffer spent five months of the year at Ken-Caryl, seldom coming into the city except for issues of great moment. One room of the big house was fitted out with news tickers and a direct wire to the Chicago grain pit.

Placed in charge of the business affairs of the *News-Times* was David Towne, subsequently general treasurer for Hearst. Henry D. Carbery temporarily continued as editor of the *News* and then gave way to William Forman and William L. Cheney. Forman, who had been sports editor of Shaffer's *Chicago Post*, became managing editor, and Cheney was installed as chief editorial writer. Shaffer retained for himself the title of editor and publisher, though he was seldom available for excommunication when irate subscribers came calling.

The ax fell without warning on the *Republican*. Gloom and resentment filled the old graystone building on the alley across Sixteenth Street from the Daniels & Fisher tower. Someone chalked a big "30" on the front door. William MacLeod Raine pecked out a final editorial. Up in the fourth-floor composing room printers passed a bottle and threw Linotype slugs to purge their ire. "Why should the spirit of mortal be proud?" assistant city editor Art MacLennan inquired of the unjust fates.

"I'll let you know sometime," Gene Fowler replied and departed for the Press Club.

Two days later, Fowler recalls, he awakened at a typewriter in the *News* city room to find himself trying to write a promotion piece for the "Swat That Fly!" campaign. MacLennan now was city editor of the *News*. Harry McCabe, the police reporter, Raine, the editorial writer, and other waifs of the storm had found harbor on either the *News* or the *Times*.

Another *Republican* orphan, Arthur Chapman, decided to set himself up as a free lance. He had achieved national fame with a poem, "Out Where the West Begins," which had appeared in his column, "Center Shots," two years earlier. The dust jacket of the 1917 Boston edition of Chapman's poetical works describes the poem as "the best-known bit of verse in America" and notes that it then was hanging framed in the office of the Secretary of the Interior in Washington. The verse has been a thing of beauty and a joy forever to Western chambers of commerce, though a candid Westerner might be hard put to demonstrate any truth in it. Embroidered among the forget-me-nots on sateen parlor pillows, however, or burned into leather keepsakes, "Out Where the West Begins" became the standard of poetical excellence in homes where

the name "Milton" perhaps belonged only to the iceman. Today pulses are stirred somewhat less deeply, and possibly there are those who have never heard the lines. They run like this:

Out where the handclasp's a little stronger,
Out where the smile dwells a little longer,
 That's where the West begins;
Out where the sun is a little brighter,
Where the snows that fall are a trifle whiter,
Where the bonds of home are a wee bit tighter,
 That's where the West begins.

Out where the skies are a trifle bluer,
Out where friendship's a little truer,
 That's where the West begins;
Out where a fresher breeze is blowing,
Where there's laughter in every streamlet flowing,
Where there's more of reaping and less of sowing,
 That's where the West begins.

Out where the world is in the making,
Where fewer hearts in despair are aching,
 That's where the West begins;
Where there's more of singing and less of sighing,
Where there's more of giving and less of buying,
And a man makes friends without half trying—
 That's where the West begins.

Not everyone west of the Missouri subscribed to the Chapman dogma, of course. Parodies were many and not long in coming. One anonymous poet, reprinted in *Trail* magazine for July 1927, took a catholic view of the brotherhood of man and found in his heart a tolerance even for Eastern dudes. He called his dissent "Pepper and Salt":

Where does the West begin?
Out where the boasting's a little stronger,
Out where the hair grows a little longer,
Where the talk is loud and runs to boast,
And to press your pants is a crime, almost,
Where the laugh is loud and the manners rude,
And to shave your neck marks a man a dude—
That's where the West begins.

Where does the East begin?
Where the streams are shallower and the hills are flat,
And a man is judged by his coat and hat,
Where the women boss and the men folk think
That toast is food and tea is a drink.

Where the men use powder and the wrist-watch ticks
And everyone else but themselves are hicks—
That's where the East begins.

Now East is East and West is West,
They each have some bad and they each have some best.
For it isn't a matter of lines on a map
That makes a guy regular or makes him a sap.
The folks out West may run to brag,
And the knees of their pants may sort of sag
But there's many a guy in the boundless West
With a heart as staunch as his leather vest.
And there's many a guy in the East, by heck,
Who presses his pants and shaves his neck,
Who's got good nerve and a gilt-edged soul
If he does mess around with a finger bowl.

When the *Republican* folded Chapman established himself as the Great West Syndicate and began mailing out feature articles and pictures to Eastern newspapers. His famous by-line helped, and for a time he did well. His book of poems, meanwhile, was going through four editions. Then the approaching war in Europe began to fill the columns of newspapers everywhere. The market was shot for essays on Western scenery and ham-handed hospitality. Chapman closed down the Great West Syndicate in 1914 and moved up to Welton Street to join his former colleagues as managing editor of the *Times*.

His counterparts on the morning-side *News* were headed for trouble. The issue was the strike of thousands of coal miners in southern Colorado, a major conflict in the effort of the United Mine Workers to gain recognition from the Rockefeller-dominated Western fuel and steel industry. Forman and Chenery had been trying to play it straight, and with some success. The slumped circulation of the *News* had gained slightly when readers discovered they were getting, for the first time, unbiased news and independent editorial comment on the touchy situation. The Rockefeller interests were bigger than Colorado and knew it. So they ran things. In an atmosphere of venality the fractious independence of the *News* was rash and novel enough to attract considerable attention and some admirers.

The coal kings put the screws to Governor Elias M. Ammons and forced him to send the state militia into the mine towns. The future editor of *Collier's*, Chenery, assigned the future editor of *Liberty* magazine, Harvey Duell, to go along and observe the operation for the *News*. Gene Fowler went for the *Times*. Covering for the Scripps-McRae *Express* was the crusading Don McGregor. They soon discovered that strikebreakers of the notorious Baldwin-Felts organization, imported from West Virginia, were being placed in uniforms of Colorado National

Guardsmen. McGregor became so convinced of the justice of the miners' cause that he threw over his job and carried arms in one of their skirmishes with the militia. The *News* was trying to report the strike impartially and honestly. The *Express* went all the way in support of the UMW. Well into the twenties *Express* reporters were still barred from the state coal mine inspector's office.

The striking miners and their families, expelled from company-owned houses, gathered into tent colonies. One of the largest of these was at Ludlow. There, on April 21, 1914, the guardsmen and company detectives, using explosive bullets, machine-gunned and set fire to the grubby tent city. Thirteen women and children were burned to death, five men and a boy killed in the fighting. Three of the attackers, all guards for the Victor-American Fuel Company, also died.⁶

The "Ludlow Massacre" aroused immediate indignation across the country, but nowhere did it seethe more hotly than in the editorial rooms of the *Rocky Mountain News*, where twenty-nine-year-old William Chenery stood throughout the day of April 21 watching the dispatches come in. He wrote one mild editorial deploring the tragedy and suggesting that, since the Colorado National Guard was no longer a non-partisan force engaged in maintaining public order, federal troops ought to be brought in. He showed the editorial to Forman and Dave Towne. Forman predicted that it would "raise hell" in spite of its reasonableness and temperate language. The business manager suggested, "If you're going to print that kind of an editorial, why not make it stronger?" Chenery tore up his first effort, sat down at his typewriter, and hammered out "The Massacre of the Innocents."

The horror of the shambles at Ludlow is overwhelming. Not since the days when pitiless red men wreaked vengeance upon intruding frontiersmen and upon their women and children has this Western country been stained with so foul a deed.

The details of the massacre are horrible. Mexico offers no barbarity so base as that of the murder of defenseless women and children by the mine guards in soldiers' clothing. Like whitened sepulchers we boast of American civilization with this infamous thing at our very doors. Huerta murdered Madero, but even Huerta did not shoot an innocent little boy seeking water for his mother who lay ill. Villa is a barbarian, but in his maddest excess Villa has not turned machine guns on imprisoned women and children. Where is the outlaw so far beyond the pale of humankind as to burn the tent over the heads of nursing mothers and helpless little babies?

Out of this infamy one fact stands clear. Machine guns did the murder. The machine guns were in the hands of mine guards, most of whom were also members of the state militia. It was private war, with

⁶The full story of Ludlow and the Colorado coal wars is told from the miners' viewpoint in Barron B. Beshoar's biography of John R. Lawson, one of the UMW leaders, *Out of the Depths* (Denver, 1942 and 1957).

the wealth of the richest man in the world behind the mine guards.

Once and for all time the right to employ armed guards must be taken away from private individuals and corporations. To the state, and to the state alone, belongs the right to maintain peace. Anything else is anarchy. Private warfare is the only sort of anarchy the world has ever known, and armed forces employed by private interests have introduced the only private wars of modern times. This practice must be stopped. If the state laws are not strong enough, then the federal government must step in. At any cost, private warfare must be destroyed.

Who are these mine guards to whom is entrusted the sovereign right to massacre? Four of the fraternity were electrocuted recently in New York. They are the gunmen of the great cities, the off-scourings of humanity, whom a bitter heritage has made the wastrels of the world. Warped by the wrongs of their own upbringing, they know no justice and they care not for mercy. They are hardly human in intelligence, and not as high in the scale of kindness as domestic animals.

Yet they are not the guilty ones. The blood of the innocent women and children rests on the hands of those who for the greed of dollars employed such men and bought such machines of murder. The world has not been hard upon these; theirs has been a gentle upbringing. Yet they reck not of human life when pecuniary interests are involved.

The blood of women and children, burned and shot like rats, cries aloud from the ground. The great state of Colorado has failed them. It has betrayed them. Her militia, which should have been impartial protectors of the peace, have acted as murderous gunmen. The machine guns which played in the darkness upon the homes of humble men and women, whose only crime was an effort to earn an honest living, were bought and paid for by agents of the mine owners. Explosive bullets have been used on children. Does the bloodiest page in the French Revolution approach this in hideousness?

In the name of humanity, in the name of civilization, we have appealed to President Wilson. His ear heard the wail of the innocent, outraged and dying Mexico. Cannot the President give heed to the sufferings of his own people?

Think, Mr. President, of the captain of the strikers, Louis Tikas, whose truce with the gunmen was ended with his murder. Think of the fifty-one shots which were passed through the strike leader. Think of his body, which has lain exposed since his infamous killing. Then, with that vast power which has been committed to you as the executive of a great nation, attend to the misery wrought by an anarchistic lust for dollars. Without your speedy aid the poor and the needy, betrayed by the state, may be slaughtered to the last smiling babe.⁷

The editorial rattled windows in the White House. It was picked up and reprinted by many of the major newspapers and magazines of the nation. Wilson dispatched United States troops to Colorado, and peace finally came to the coal fields.

⁷Chenery, op. cit., p. 55.

Commenting on the editorial in his recent autobiography, Chenery wryly observes:

Forman's forecast that it would raise journalistic hell in Colorado was a model of understatement. At the time the *Rocky Mountain News* had a circulation of about 16,000. The next morning the news circulation was trebled, and the paper was able to retain the same high circulation until I left and the policy was changed. No other newspaper had made so outspoken a protest against lawlessness in the coal mine war. Clearly the public welcomed a frank expression of editorial opinion. Literally thousands of letters were sent to the paper. We published full pages of letters for days after the event.⁸

Although there was a net gain, some of the letters were subscription cancellations rather than epistles of praise for bold journalism. The *News*, however, boasted of its enemies by publishing the cancellation notices along with the praise:

Mr. Frank McDonough, Sr., a lawyer in the McPhee Bldg., informs us that he wishes to cancel his subscription to *The Times*, but will continue as a subscriber to *The News* "under compulsion" as he needs a morning newspaper. Mr. McDonough is mistaken. We have ourselves cancelled his subscription to *The News*, since we do not desire any compulsory subscribers.

Mr. J. Foster Symes [later federal district judge] requests that we cancel *The Times*, but continue *The News* except on Sunday. We have cancelled all.

The Colorado Fuel & Iron Company filed a \$500,000 libel suit against the *News* on April 27, though it never came to trial. A fuming committee from the Chamber of Commerce waited upon Chenery and Forman. The *News*, the committee said, was giving Colorado a bad name abroad. Such unfavorable publicity must stop. Chenery argued.

"We're getting nowhere with this pinhead," the committee chairman snorted. "Let's go."

Chenery continues the story:

A day or two later I was informed that the Chamber of Commerce was planning an advertising boycott of the *Rocky Mountain News*. If the Chamber of Commerce could induce the department stores and other large advertisers to boycott the *News*, we would be hurt seriously. We found help from two powerful but quite unexpected sources. Former Senator Patterson . . . battled for us and against the boycott at the Chamber of Commerce meeting. Senator Patterson was an old man and a Democrat. His political life and his business life were all but

⁸Ibid., p. 57.

finished. Yet with nothing at stake for himself, he did battle against those who would intimidate his old paper by economic pressure. Our other ally was, of all people, Harry Tammen, co-owner of the *Denver Post*, the strongest paper financially in Denver. Tammen took the very practical view that if the *Rocky Mountain News* were subdued by an advertising boycott, the taste of victory might induce the boycotters to whip the *Post* into submission. Thus gradually the boycotters were defeated. That, incidentally, was an illuminating experience for me. I saw at first hand that it was not necessary to yield to advertising pressure and that if an editor were disposed to stand by his principles, he might find ways of defending himself against attack. Nothing that has happened to me in the subsequent thirty-five years has caused me to change this belief.⁹

Chenery stood fast, but Shaffer caved. A message came through from Chicago instructing the young editorial writer to "pursue a milder line." He resigned and went east to become editor of the *New York Globe* and then for twenty-five years editor and publisher of *Collier's*. Harvey Duell quit too. He became editor of *Liberty* and the *New York Daily News*. Shaffer transferred Forman back to the *Chicago Post*. City editor Arthur MacLennan and news editor Frank C. Farrar also went to Shaffer's Windy City paper, though the latter returned later as managing editor. Gene Fowler picked up and moved down the street to join Tammen and Bonfils for four robust years. Chenery recalls Fowler as one of the "very bright young men" on his staff and remembers that

. . . Love and marriage hit Gene Fowler a resounding blow while I was still there to catch the echoes. In celebration of the event Fowler's father-in-law presented the young couple with a modest bungalow on the outskirts of Denver. Gene was a sports reporter and he also had a signed column of comment on sporting events and personages. This gave him a fairly free hand at choosing his texts. He was so much impressed with the wonder of his new home, and conceivably too with love and marriage, that every day for two months he wrote and published at the top of his column a poem in praise of his bungalow. The real estate business lost a lyrical advocate when Gene remained true to journalism and literature.¹⁰

With the departure of so many stalwarts and the about-face from progressive policies, morale of the *News* staff plunged almost as sharply as circulation figures. Within a few weeks after the paper began speaking in tones acceptable to the Chamber of Commerce and Seventeenth Street, the subscription lists were cut in half and the *News* once again was as vulnerable as ever to the *Post's* whoppings.

⁹*Ibid.*, pp. 59-60.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, p. 64.

It could have been a better fight. Shaffer had the resources and the *News-Times* staffs, in spite of the departures, still had talent. Lee Casey was beginning to make himself felt. Arthur Chapman remained at his post. Wilbur Daniel Steele, who would win fame as a novelist and modern master of the short story, did a hitch on the rim of the copy desk. Another famous writer, Courtney Ryley Cooper, was fired from the *News* by editors who decided he couldn't write. He went to the *Post* nursing his wounded pride and soon lengthy pieces in an elegantly purple prose began appearing under the by-line Ryley Cooper. But the slur still rankled, and more than a year later Cooper saw what he thought was an opportunity to put the Welton Street editors in their places. A lady named Stella Smith had become tired of matrimony and punctuated her disillusion with pistol shots into her husband. It made a famous trial in West Side Court. Cooper covered it for the *Post*. While waiting for the verdict to come in, however, he fell victim to good fellowship. Later that night he marched up the steep stairway to the *News* city room, sat down at a typewriter without a word to anyone, and worked with inspired diligence for more than an hour. This, obviously, would be a masterpiece which would impress those comma-smashers who had murdered his glowing style. Finally he slapped the copy on the city desk and stalked out with that regal dignity which comes only to headwaiters and offended drunks. The story was incoherent but the total effect was grand.

Subsequently Cooper became press agent for the Tamm-Bonfils circus and acquired the sawdust lore which he utilized effectively in a lean, hard-hitting, entirely unpurple style for many of his popular magazine stories. Between the two of them he and Gene Fowler managed to present a raucous front-curtain prologue to the Denver visit of Queen Marie of Rumania in November 1926. Fowler now was New York big time and was traveling with the royal entourage in the press Pullman immediately ahead of the queen's private car. Harvey Sethman, for many years lay executive of the Colorado Medical Society but then a *News* reporter, tells the story. Sethman's opposition on the assignment was Cooper. The special train pulled slowly into Union Station and a red carpet was run out. A delegation of social nabobs and civic dignitaries pressed forward to extend a formal welcome to the popular queen. After a short wait a stir about the private car indicated that the titled visitor was about to emerge. A hush fell over the crowd. In the short interval of silence Fowler came to the door of his car, spotted his dear, long-lost friend on the platform, and let out a Comanche war whoop:

"Coop! You old son of a bitch! How the hell are you?"

An instant later Queen Marie made her grand entrance into the Mile High City. There were some suggestions that Fowler, whose earlier Denver escapades had not been forgotten, should be turned over to the protocol division of the State Department for summary execution.

As World War I approached, other of Fowler's old cronies were still among the mainstays of Denver journalism. Jack Carberry, now with the *Express*, and "Red" Feeney, temporarily with the *Post*, knew more about the police department than most of the cops. What they didn't know the lean little cricket-active Ray Humphreys of the *Times* did. Harry McCabe of the *News*, senior factotum of the police beat, smiled indulgently on the scurrings of his young associates and phoned in his exclusives without stirring from his rickety chair in the pressroom. It was a formidable quartet, and detectives sometimes suspiciously accused one or more of the foursome of being on the scene before the crime occurred. They were often joined on crime stories of the day by Joseph E. Cook of the *Times*, today an august judge of the Denver District Court. Carberry currently is executive sports editor of the *Post* after years of service on the *News*. Humphreys, always a sleuth at heart, has been chief investigator for the Denver district attorney for decades. He still operates a typewriter with great speed, verve, and sustained violence, using a single finger of his right hand. If anything should happen to his right index finger half the true detective magazines in America would lose their most active correspondent.

When Humphreys and Joe Cook prepared to march off to war a farewell party was organized. They had originally tried to sign up with a proposed mounted regiment to be called "Teddy's Rough Riders." But a private regiment of horse, even with so luminous a heritage, was frowned upon by unromantic military authorities, and the prospective newsmen-warriors were forced to settle for less dashing roles. The party in their honor proceeded as farewell parties do until sometime after midnight, at which hour it was deemed appropriate to rent a horse, possibly as a final symbolic gesture. Jack O'Brien, a Shaffer penman and later a prominent San Antonio businessman, demonstrated his equestrian skills by riding the beast up the twenty-five narrow and squeaking steps to the *News* second-floor city room. It seemed hilarious at the time, Carberry remembers, and the pasty-faced troglodytes of the dog watch, nursing their coffee and ulcers, were properly startled when O'Brien rode hallooing through the swinging doors at the top of the stairs. His mount, however, took one look at the way he had come and refused to descend. The horse remained at pasture in the sports department, munching copy paper, until late next day when a heavy hauling company was engaged to lower him out a rear window with sling and winch. By that time the animal was burping sulphite wood pulp and the janitors were threatening to resign in a body. If they had wanted careers as white wings, they asserted, they would have joined the city sanitation department.

Old "Cap" Smith was still reviving the Colorado mining industry for each new edition and manicuring his nails menacingly with a fifteen-inch pair of shears. "Cap" wandered about the office with his pants

sagging precariously and his suspenders drooped sorrowfully over his backside. In order to remain forever handsome and youthful the captain used a hair dye—shoe polish, the rest of the staff insisted—on his noble mustaches. But the doughty old veteran's eyes were not what they were in Loveland's day, and he could never seem to get the dye on evenly. The piebald effect was startling to strangers.

Another longtimer was James H. MacLennan, editorial writer whose enormous erudition was always spoken of with hushed respect. James H. was an emigrant Scot and no relation to Arthur MacLennan, the *News'* city editor. He encountered difficulty making the transition to the brash, unlearned twentieth century. For years he methodically turned out lengthy Sunday editorials, bristling with scholarship, about the more esoteric Hindu philosophies and the fiscal policies of the Phoenician Empire. No one was quite sure what the editorials meant, but they were tremendously impressive. Finally, midway in the twenties, MacLennan was let go in the interest of gearing the editorial page to the fashionable urgencies of the new day. It was not a harsh discharge. True to his national instincts and in a gross flaunting of every newspaper tradition, James H. had saved his money. He continued to live in his bachelor's quarters at the plush Brown Palace. Consulting actuarial tables and his physician, MacLennan calculated that he would survive until he was eighty, and he began living on his principal at that precise rate. But he miscalculated. Shortly before mid-century the management of the Brown called the paper to say that the bookish old fellow, an admirable and desirable guest who but recently had been presented with a cake for his eightieth birthday, had quietly collapsed. He had not eaten for two days and was dead broke. Lee Casey and Joe McMeel arranged quarters for him at an old folks' home. He died at eighty-eight with the maximum budget of books from the public library at his elbow.

Day-side city editor for the *Times* during the World War I years was George Sanford Holmes, later the *News'* Washington correspondent for a quarter century or more. In addition to sound qualities as a practical newspaperman, Holmes had several more spectacular claims to local fame. For one, he wrote the lyrics to "Come to Cool Colorado", official hymn of the Kiwanis Club. For another, he authored a poem, "Only a Cop," which for many years was a part of the obsequies of any man behind a badge who died in line of duty. But many remembered Holmes for the first big story he had covered. "Weston the Walker," a notable heel-and-toe man of the times, was hiking about the country to spread the word on clean living. He decided to stroll from Omaha to Denver, and Holmes went out to meet him. Together they marched triumphantly into the city while the slightly winded Holmes made notes on the values of walking for health as opposed to the indolent evils of the cycling craze.

Jack Barrows, who fell into the primrose pathways of advertising, then

was covering financial news, Seventeenth Street, and the hotels. Charles F. (Nick) Carter sat on the rim of the copy desk with Frank Plumb, fulminating about the illiteracy of reporters and in despair of the modern generation's spelling. Another copyreader, rewrite man, and Sunday feature writer was Frank A. McClelland, also known as "The Walrus" for his mustache. McClelland came to retirement age, was presented with the usual traveling bag, and departed for his small ranch in northern Colorado. In a few months he was back. "Damn quiet was getting on my nerves," he explained. Also on the copy desk was a deaf and dumb genius known then and remembered now as "The Dummy." His name was Will C. Ullrich, though no one used it. The nickname was rude but not disrespectful; for "The Dummy" generally was accepted as the most skillful copy editor Denver had seen.

Shifts were occurring on the feminine side of the office. Kate Russell left about the time war broke out. Hester (Hettie) Cattell already was gone. Soon after Shaffer purchased the *News* he conceived that the suffragette excitement might be exploitable through a newspaper for women edited entirely by women. He looked around over the staffs of his various newspapers and his eye fell on the capable, serious-minded Hettie with her enormous capacity for hard work. Hettie could do anything in the shop, was head over heels in love with the newspaper business and little concerned about such grubby matters as wages—all endearing qualities. For the *News* she was book reviewer, dramatic critic, covered all musical events, and filled in her spare time with feature writing. At one point she was given a two-page center fold to tell how it felt to spend twenty-four hours in the women's cell block of the state penitentiary. In January 1914, Shaffer called her to the editorship of his projected biddy-sheet in Evanston, Illinois. Original plans called for a daily, but the enlightened experiment wound up as a weekly. Masculine-minded Evanstonians destroyed the first issue of the *North Shore Review*, "the only newspaper in the world edited exclusively by women."

"The *Review* lasted about 18 months," Hettie recalls, "and during that time I was editor, managing editor, copy editor, makeup editor and copyboy—toting all the copy to the Chicago *Evening Post* to be printed there. The editor (me) was getting \$25 a week and half the 'staff' (of about six) was kissing me good-morning every day. Honestly!"

Hettie escaped to the Chicago *Examiner*, then to the *Tribune*, and went on to New York to help found the *Mirror* in 1924. She has been a member of that paper's staff almost continuously since, covered the Lindbergh kidnap trial, the Hall-Mills case, and the *Morro Castle* disaster, trailed the Dionne quintuplets and chased Daddy Browning and Peaches all over Westchester County. Effusive bussing is not generally regarded as operational procedure at the *Mirror*.

Hettie's place on the distaff side of the *News-Times* city room was filled variously by Marie Keffer, Katherine Ann Porter, Mattie I. Durkee,

and police reporter Harry McCabe's beauteous sister Ruth. Mattie, now Mrs. Cecil R. Connor of Denver, was the all-around girl reporter. Novelist Clyde Brion Davis, who later handled her articles as a *News* copyreader, remembers that she sought to elevate the dignity of prosaic hay by giving it a Hellenic spelling: "alphalpha." Katherine Ann Porter was society editor for the *News*, and Ruth McCabe tended similar chores for the afternoon *Times*. Impressionable males of the era speak nostalgically of Ruth's jet hair and Irish eyes. She was an unmerciful flirt, and all unattached hearts turned over when she walked to the drinking fountain. Among others, Art MacLennan wanted to marry her, but she ruled that his habits were too wild. Another of her admirers was the blond and boyish Pyke Johnson, who had climbed the rungs from copy boy to sports editor. Johnson today is past president and consultant to the Automotive Safety Foundation in Washington. His son Pyke, Jr., is editor in chief of Anchor Books, a division of the publishing house of Doubleday & Company. Pyke, Jr.'s birth was proudly announced among the box scores on the *News*' sports page, a distinction which has fallen to few book publishers. Pyke, Sr., was one of the first sports writers to suggest putting numbers on football players, for which he was denounced by coaches of the day. It would ruin their "hidden ball" plays.

When the nation changed its mind about being too proud to fight, the *News* sent seventy-five of its men and one of its women off to war. Mattie Durkee shipped out as a Red Cross worker. Along with Ray Humphreys, Jack O'Brien, and Joe Cook, *News* men who joined the colors included state editor Marty O'Toole, reporters Jack Barrows and Deane A. Dickason, and a young cub, Charles Lounsbury, who one day would become editor of the paper. Two of the men—Harvey Setchel and R. Hughes—didn't come back from France. Many of the others returned to take their old places on the staff, and three of them—Ray E. Olson, D. E. Jones, and H. F. Sciple—still are employees.

During the war Buffalo Bill Cody died in Denver. It was widely charged that his heart had been broken when Tammen and Bonfils took his world-touring Wild West Show away from him. Cody is buried atop Lookout Mountain overlooking Golden and Denver. The granite tomb is reinforced with concrete and railroad rails to discourage reciprocal body-snatching. Bill had specifically desired that he be buried on his ranch near Cody, Wyoming, but the *Post* took over promotion of the funeral, which was a splendid affair, and overruled the old showman's last wishes. The Cody grave, as the *Post* so accurately forecast, has become a signal tourist attraction.

So when the boys came home again the familiar sight of a queue of adoring children tagging the white-haired Cody about the streets was absent from the Denver scene. There were other changes. While the bravest and finest were away and unable to defend their rights, sneaky pecksniffs had pried open the U. S. Constitution and inserted national

prohibition. (Colorado actually had gone dry in 1914, but wet Wyoming was so close to Denver that the drouth was scarcely noticeable.) The nourishing free lunch, source of many a reporter's vitamins and proteins, had disappeared. But it just wasn't true, as billed, that the doors of hell had been slammed shut once and forever. Ministers were nonplused by the turn of events, but police reporters were jubilant. Never had there been such lurid crimes for them to cover. Political reporters reaped benefits too. A case of petty corruption could be turned up any week in almost any office at City Hall or the Statehouse. Lawyers and physicians possessed of stomach pumps were busy as cranberry merchants. Some broken homes were patched and a few barefoot children shod. All in all, it was a happy time for nearly everyone. Drinking continued almost unabated while the majesty of the law tumbled and things illegal acquired the added attraction of titillating naughtiness. A noble if occasionally abused beverage was demeaned into something called booze, a fluid of dubious origins which caused blindness and other infirmities. Leadville Moon—concocted, some said, of black powder and old miners' overalls—flowed into Denver as if there were a pipeline down from the Cloud City. Rumrunners' trucks disturbed the slumbers of good citizens living near major highways. There was more fancy gunplay than there had been since Charley Harrison left town.

Tastes and discriminations suffered sad diminishments. The police reporters, caught short at one point with nothing in the old morgue drains, conspired with orderlies at Denver General Hospital to siphon off the alcohol from surgical specimens. The base crime came to olfactory attention a few weeks later when the substituted tap water failed to maintain an acceptable state of preservation in a priceless collection of antique gall bladders, appendixes, and other viscera. By this time the alcohol had been traded off to Turkey Joe, locally prominent for an especially palatable bathtub gin, and the culprits never could be called to account.

Some of the more enterprising *News-Times* newsboys on downtown street corners saw in prohibition an opportunity to diversify. This led to a rather peevish headline in the *Post*: "A Bottle of Booze with Every News."

The *News*' puckish photographer, Harry Rhoads, was not then and is not now a drinker. He attributes this to a haunting vision from his childhood, though others say he has maintained such a high level of exuberant good spirits for more than fifty years that artificial stimulation would have been gilding the lily.

"When I was a boy," Harry explains, "I used to deliver the *Republican*. Every morning about three o'clock I had to go down with my horse and cart and pick up my papers. This was in the 1890s, and the private wine rooms with side entrances for the ladies were doing a great business in that neighborhood. When I'd come down the unpaved street with

my cart I'd see four or five women nearly every morning lying drunk in the cobblestone gutter. It got to bothering me so much that I decided I would never take up drinking."

In very recent years his physician has persuaded Harry—now in his late seventies—that a medicinal drop or two before meals might benefit his constitution and would not greatly damage his moral fiber. Harry now takes a careful one, though he probably still sees women in gutters in his mind's eye. This distresses him; for Harry is fond of ladies. There are social-set matrons of his acquaintance in Denver whom he has photographed as children, mothers, and grandmothers, each time with courtly flourishes. Harry has never forgotten the bow taught him at dancing school—one arm across his ample middle, the other across his back—and he employs it whenever presented to a lady. A cherubic and unspoiled soul, and everyone in Denver loves him.

Although Harry did not touch the stuff himself he was always broad-minded about others' thirsts. A special camera equipment case was provided him for use on raids. The bag would accommodate the cumbersome flash-powder equipment of the day with room left over for several bottles filched by light-fingered reporters or passed out by compassionate prohibition agents.

Harry assisted in providing refreshments for the grand opening of the present Denver Press Club in the early twenties. A large seizure of illicit liquor had been made. The booty was stored at the West Side Court building. Officers who had participated in the notable *coup* against Satan straightened their ties and awaited arrival of photographers to preserve their noble deed in the gazettes of the city. Harry computed how much flash powder would be required to blind his subjects temporarily without burning the building down. While the officers groped around in the smoke "Red" Feeney carried several cases of choice bonded out to Harry's Model T coupe.

Feeney then discovered that he had carelessly omitted from the photo some of the key figures of the occasion. These overlooked worthies had been standing coily aside trying not to look hurt. The picture would have to be reposed. The officers brightened, smoothed their hair, and jostled each other into position. Harry fired again, and Feeney was able to make two more trips to the curb.

"Red" got so much liquor into that Ford I could hardly drive away," Harry says. "The back end was full and the seat propped up so high I couldn't reach the pedals. I took it all out to Eddie Day's house, handed it in through a side bedroom window and it was stashed under his bed. Everyone at the Press Club opening seemed to have a very nice time."

On another outing the flash-powder technique failed. Feeney and Rhoads were dispatched to accompany a raid on the Douglas County ranch of a prominent physician suspected of practicing illegal chemistry as a hobby. The doctor's milk house was found to contain neat rows of

glistening, well-tended stills. Everything was spotless, hygienic and scientific, reflecting a high degree of professional pride. The doctor and his assistants were interrupted in the cellar as they fixed bonding labels to their product. Harry arranged the raiders and their captives so that each would receive full benefit, and cut loose with his Vesuvius. But Feeney stumbled at the top of the stairs and his samples of the "evidence" shattered into pitiful pools on the cellar floor. All was not lost, however. The thoughtful Harry earlier had taken the precaution of lugging several carboys of undecanted spirits down the road a piece and hiding them in the weeds. The enterprising journalists picked them up on their way back to the office.

"Red" Feeney at this point was back on the *News*. Like many of his associates, he made several circuits of the two papers before finally coming to rest. Eddie Day was another example of the mobility. At the *News* he held the positions of sports editor, city editor, and managing editor before moving down to Champa Street to snug harbor as managing editor of the *Post*. Eddie was a small and crusty Irishman who developed a devastating on-duty scowl to counterbalance an off-duty affability. He was a man of total prejudices and fixed ideas, and he liked any lead so long as it contained a well-tested cliché. He was particularly appreciative of stories which began "Mystery surrounds . . ." "Mystery surrounds the disappearance of John Doe. . . ." "Mystery surrounds the fate of Senate Bill 507. . . ." His reporters soon tumbled to the gimmick, and a miasma of mystery descended on the city and all its works. Having spent most of his life observing newspapermen at close range, Eddie sent his son to law school. Justice Edward C. Day, Jr., now sits on the Colorado Supreme Court.

Not all the *News* staff members were mere observers, beneficiaries, or victims of the Volstead experiment. Two had been active participants. One of them picked up his background for police reporting as a rum-runner in the Wyoming-Colorado trade. Sometimes his truck would have to crash through a road block of prohibition officers or hijackers, and bullets would be exchanged. Ben Cope had been a circus clown and then a dry agent before joining the *News* staff. One night Ben and the retired rumrunner got to comparing notes and discovered they had shot at each other in several dark encounters. The revelation did not disturb a beautiful friendship.

Clyde Brion Davis, novelist and historian of the arts of chance, came to the *News* in 1920 after making the "shocking discovery that the business office and the editorial department of the *Denver Post* were under the same roof." Davis has a tender memory of the ex-bootlegger, who enjoyed the rough reputation arising from his beyond-the-law past and did everything he could to enhance it, even to carrying a pistol with black bicycle tape around the grip. Davis recalls:

His remarkable facility in obtaining the facts quickly about such crimes as bank robberies led to rumors that he knew more than he should have known earlier than he should have known it. While he would have been the first to encourage that sort of rumor, I am convinced his edge came from an extraordinary talent for palship with cops. The police from the chief down to the rawest recruit adored him because, if his literary aptitude was meager, he still possessed a genius for spelling the names of policemen correctly.

I do believe his reputation for toughness was somewhat exaggerated because late one night he undertook to eliminate me and I am still here. This was in the hotel room of the late Guy Usher, a former railroad brakeman turned actor and at that time "heavy" in the Denham Theater stock company. Present besides our host were the former war correspondent, Louis Edgar Browne, and a clever little copy reader named Garry Garretson. My memory seems to be convenient enough so that I cannot recall the provocation and I cannot say what degree of justification our rumrunner friend had for his action. But, as some of Denver's crew of Western writers used to have it, "With a vile oath he drew his six gun, swearing he would have my life."

At that Guy Usher, Louis Browne and Garry Garretson departed, waiting down the hotel corridor, I suppose, for the boom that would signify the end of Davis. But I had been trained in the first war in what was called commando tactics in the second war and I knew his "six-gun" was a single-action .41-caliber that had to be cocked before it could be fired. So there was no boom and I returned the thing to him finally, after taking out the cartridges, because it had been a gift from the late revered Chief of Police Hamilton Armstrong. And the others came back and I suppose Guy Usher, who ended his days as a villain in Hollywood Westerns, poured a drink.

Some years later the rumrunner left the newspaper business and became, spare the mark! lingerie buyer for a Denver department store. Subsequently he operated his own ladies' ready-to-wear store in the East. Bootlegger, police reporter, lingerie, ready-to-wear. A full life.

John Chapman, the astringent drama critic for the New York *Daily News*, got his first by-line in the Denver *Times* a few years before Clyde Davis became a *News* stalwart. His revered father, Arthur, was still managing editor in 1917 when young Jack signed on at fifteen dollars a week to do a double, reporter and photographer. His first assignment was to cover a ladies' golf tournament at the Denver Country Club. He pleaded that he knew nothing about golf, but Eddie Day reassured him: "Aw, that's okay, kid. Just rewrite the story from tomorrow morning's *News*." His effort carried the credit line, "By Jack Chapman."

"I thought this was just buttering up the boss's son and completely undeserved besides, and said so," Chapman remembers. "I don't think I ever had another by-line in the *Times* during the two years I worked for the paper."

The son's memory recaptures a picture of his much-respected and -admired father in action:

I remember that Dad never took off his derby. In summer he'd take off his jacket, unbutton his vest and roll up his sleeves, but the hat was always on the back of his head. I think this was the trademark of a newspaperman then, the way a *New York World* "journalist" would later identify himself by carrying a stick.

Dad hired a motley crew. Anybody who came West with TB was sure to get a hearing. Being a verse-writer himself, he was always sympathetic toward any young man who wanted to write poetry. Thus it was that he got Clifford Laube, who covered the Statehouse. Cliff later came to New York, where I got a job for him on the *News*, and later he switched to the *New York Times*, from which he finally retired with great honor.

Dad was as quiet a man as a managing editor as he was as a father. Never yelled, never got upset. Once, though, he did show some irritation. The first edition was being made up and there was barely enough type for it. The racks of filler, or moonlight, were stripped bare. Dad complained to the city editor, George Sanford Holmes, about the lack of foresight in not having enough moonlight on hand. "Why don't you use your noodle?" he asked. From that time, filler was called "noodle stuff" by the staff.

I recall my own work on the *Denver Times* as greatly exciting. Covering police and having a police badge cleverly hidden on my vest, so that when I stood in the streetcar and held a strap the badge would show discreetly and people would know how important I was. One exciting time was Armistice Day, when the town went nuts and I had my Graphic. I still recall one picture of a small tailor shop whose proprietor had painted on the window, "We Made the Kaiser Running Pants."

Another of the incipient poets hired by Chapman senior for the *Times* turned out to be Thomas Hornsby Ferril, intimate of Frost and Sandburg, essayist for *Harper's* and today the West's strongest poetic voice. Ferril and his wife Helen now publish Professor Goldrick's old weekly *Herald* as a legal journal and a vehicle for Tom's widely admired personal essays. His lines to water, the West's god and goad, are illustrated by murals in the rotunda of the Colorado State Capitol.

Ferril verses were not always so highly regarded. He began using poems at the end of the column he was permitted to write after breaking in on nearly every beat in town. Richard Le Gallienne noticed the promising lines and praised them in the *New York Times*. Thereafter, it was decided, the *News* would have to have a Ferril poem every week. The weekly stint at five dollars a poem continued even after Ferril left the paper a few years later, and many of the verses appeared in his first book, *High Passage*. But one of the periodic retrenchments came.

"A janitor died," Tom recollects, "and it was discovered other adjustments could be made to effect a weekly payroll saving of a hundred and ninety-five dollars. Eddie Day suggested they drop Ferril and make it an even two hundred."

Tom also remembers another brush with the practical-minded Day, whose short temper and abrupt bursts of direct action made him a sort of stay-at-home Harold Ross (*The New Yorker's* Ross was born in the silver city of Aspen, Colorado). As a side line Day was in partnership with Pyke Johnson, Sr., in operation of a neighborhood motion picture house. Ferril at this date was doing a turn as drama and movie editor of the *Times* and naïvely attempting candid reviews. One night after Tom had gone home Eddie broke down the entertainment page and re-edited it along lines he felt were more likely to produce patrons at his box office and favors from the film exchanges. The name David O. Selznick appeared seventeen times.

It was during this era that the church editor broke his leg in a Peeping Tom episode. This gentleman, who shall remain anonymous, had been ordained by a splinter sect but found the earthly rewards of the clergy slender. He preached on Sundays and made up for the collection plate's deficiencies by editing a weekly church page for the *News*. This sometimes brought him to the office late at night. The six-story Orient Hotel had been built adjoining the *News* building on the north with only an areaway intervening. Its windows peered directly into the editorial rooms, and vice versa. Couples who patronized the Orient occasionally were distracted, or indifferent, and failed to draw the blinds. It was a constant temptation to pruriency, and, alas, a great many *News* staff members over a great many years succumbed. Including the reverend church editor. Thus it came about one night that the entire late force was in thrall when unexpected visitors mounted the stairs and entered through the swinging doors. In his haste to descend from a desk top the church editor fell and fractured his tibia.

The plight in which reporter Jack Steele found himself was only slightly less embarrassing. The brash Steele, caught short during an interview with John D. Rockefeller, Jr., touched the financier for a loan.

"I'm very sorry, my friend," Rockefeller said, "but I don't have any money with me. Could you take a check?"

Steele accepted a twenty-dollar check. But when he sought to cash it the suspicious bank tellers on Seventeenth Street flatly accused him of forgery and offered to call the cops.

The undaunted Harry Rhoads also had a brush with Rockefeller and his money on one of the steel king's several trips west during the labor troubles in the coal mines. Harry shot a picture of Rockefeller and his sons at Union Station, and Rockefeller, who didn't want his boys photographed, grabbed Harry by the collar.

"I want to buy that plate," Rockefeller said.

"You haven't got enough money to buy it," Rhoads told the richest man in the world. "It doesn't belong to me. It belongs to the *Rocky Mountain News*. See the city editor."

Rockefeller was disposed to argue the matter and kept a firm grip on Harry. The crowd which gathered around was partisan; ever since Ludlow the name "Rockefeller" hadn't been popular in Colorado.

"Hit him, Harry," one of the bystanders urged. "He can't do that to you. Hit him."

Harry concedes he never has had the figure for fisticuffs. "So I just talked to him," he says. "I asked him to be a gentleman about the matter and told him I was just doing my job. If he had objections he should see my city editor. That seemed to calm him down. We parted friends."

The picture appeared on page one next day, along with a full account of the Rhoads-Rockefeller dialogue. A photographer for the *Post* accepted five hundred dollars for *his* plate and got fired. Bonfils was sensitive about such prerogatives.

Then came Teapot Dome.

A reporter for the *Post* uncovered in 1922 information which linked Interior Secretary Albert B. Fall with the illegal leasing of the Teapot Dome naval oil reserve in Wyoming out of which oil tycoon Harry Sinclair testified he planned to make \$100 millions. Bonfils, however, prudently withheld the story while printing editorial attacks on the leases. Meanwhile he became acquainted with a rival oilman who had been offended by being shut out of the deal. Teapot Dome now was becoming a national stench and the scandal was rocking the Harding administration, but the *Post's* attacks on Sinclair and E. L. Doheny abruptly ceased.

When the Senate investigating committee got to looking into the matter it discovered that Bonfils had shared in a million-dollar under-the-table settlement, a quarter in cash, three quarters more promised, from Sinclair.¹¹ Bonfils had decided Teapot Dome was not newsworthy after all. He was called to Washington to testify. He denied wrongdoing but in the midst of the uncomfortable questioning got a promotional plug into the record: "The *Denver Post* has the greatest circulation per capita of its publication city of any newspaper in the history of the world."

"I suppose Mr. Sinclair knew all that," Senator Lenroot commented dryly.

Malicious glee reigned on Welton Street. The corsair of Champa Street had finally been nabbed with his fist in the jam pot. What a story! The *News* gave it the full treatment—for one series of editions.

Next day, as the hearing in Washington proceeded, it was disclosed that John Clean Shaffer was involved too. Shaffer, who was always

¹¹*Senate Report No. 794*, 68th Congress, 1st Session, June 6, 1924, p. 12.

pleased when biographers took note of his years as Sunday school superintendent, had written in to the plundering oilmen and suggested mildly that he be placed "on a parity" with Bonfils. The raiders decided that, viewed as a moral issue, there was merit to the suggestion. The sum of \$92,500 was passed along.¹²

Joy subsided at the *News*. Staff members were crestfallen. Their own boss was a boodler too. And a cut-price boodler at that.

The little *Express* was in its glory. It was clean. Both the big papers had been trapped and tarred. Moreover the oil scandal dovetailed perfectly with its Scrippsian liberal policies. A young reporter, Bob Chase, was dispatched to Wyoming to give on-the-scene coverage from Teapot Dome, and the *Express* peeled off large strips of hide with rending noises as loud as could be provoked from its wheezing press.

A *News* reporter of the day, John P. Lewis, tells how it was on Welton Street:

The *News* had an essential integrity that carried through as a heritage from Founder Byers. It wasn't shaken even by the revelation that Owner Shaffer was "in" on Teapot Dome.

I have wondered since why those of us who worked on the *News* didn't throw up the sponge that time, and look elsewhere for work. Probably one of the reasons is that the logical "elsewhere" was the *Post*, and compared to Bonfils and Tammien, Shaffer was a pure, innocent orchid. More fundamental, perhaps, we had faith in the *News*—and it was the *News* we were working for, not John C. Shaffer and not his son, and the *News* had integrity, and we knew it.

It was along about that time that the *Post* became strong enough for Bonfils to intimidate advertisers, to threaten those who planned to include the *News* in their schedules, and to punish those who did. One year, I recall, we learned that the *Post* had informed the officials of the annual Merchants' and Industrial Exposition held at the auditorium that if any advertising went to the *News*, the *Post* would carry none and would give no space to the event. The show management felt they had to give in, and sent word to the *News* to cancel a page or half-page or such that had been scheduled, but to send a bill for the space quietly and it would be paid. The *News* business management had the integrity to refuse to take pay for space that wasn't used, and the editorial side played it honest enough to cover the event regardless of advertising.

That was the kind of a trap the *News* was in back in those days—and any move to yell bloody murder about it publicly was forestalled by the fact that publicity would merely put the informants in the line of fire to have their heads knocked off by the *Post*. No one would stand up and testify.

John Lewis went on from Denver to become editor of Marshall Field's ill-fated experiment in address New York journalism, PM. Today he has

¹²Ibid.

achieved the goal dreamed of by half the working newspapermen in America, a weekly of his own, the *Journal-Transcript* of Franklin, New Hampshire. Lewis was a reporter for the *News* up to 1926, "everything from the Stockyards both ways," then city editor and assistant managing editor.

"It was a wonderful, fearful, rowdy time and place for newspapering," he writes, "especially for those of us who were just breaking in."

It was a time touched by the joyous insanities of prohibition, and those who survived it look back with nostalgia, I think, to the days of the speakeasy. It was a time touched by cancerous, fearful hatreds and intolerances. The Ku Kluxers all but controlled the state for a time. There were mobs and violence. Black Jack Jerome's strikebreakers were kicked into bloody insensibility in their overturned street cars at the very doors of the Cathedral before the federal troops restored order. It was a time of corruption. Nationally, the Harding regime came and went. Locally, police protection made Denver the home of America's finest confidence men until [District Attorney Philip S.] Van Cise brought in outside police and broke it up, meanwhile giving heart failure to all the owners of all the whorehouses in Denver by publicly measuring their properties for closing by way of conning the conmen into thinking he was after prostitutes, not thieves.¹³

There was a mystic side to the times. White-gowned Aimee Semple McPherson packed the auditorium with listeners and cluttered the wings with canes and crutches of the healed, some of whom went back to retrieve them next day. The House of David brought enlightenment to Arapahoe Street, and Jim Goodheart did his good works for the poor devils in the gutter until he stumbled and backslid in himself.

There was violence, crime, murder, suicide—whatever else was missed, we on the papers were intent about that and never let human tragedy slip by unheralded. There was thievery and incompetence in some of the banks, and long years before the national crash of '29, Denver had its own series of reverberating financial failures.

And there was vision. They were presumptuous, perhaps, but some people saw the growth that has since come about. The Moffat Tunnel was built, and water brought under the Divide and the Civic Center nurtured and developed at a time when most cities were building toward new slums and congestion. In the '20s, Denver had sort of an itch to be better than it was, and I wonder if that holds good today?

Lewis also remembers the night when the clown-dry agent-reporter Ben Cope took fifteen dollars—a week's pay—away from him at blackjack, and the Swedish pressroom foreman who complained to Eddie Day: "If today iss like yesterday, Yesus Christ, I hope it wasn't."

One of Lewis' predecessors as city editor was Ray Colvin, later of the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, who wore a porkpie hat, Arthur Chapman's

¹³For a full account of the cleanup of Denver's famed "Bunco Ring" see Philip S. Van Cise, *Fighting the Underworld* (Cambridge, 1936).

derby having passed from style. Frank Farrar came back from Chicago, did a term as managing editor, and went on to the San Francisco *Examiner*. Frank Farley became sports editor.

Sitting in as Colvin's assistant was William Mundhenk ("Judge") Beardshear, owlish behind horn-rimmed glasses and the dedicated enemy of ripe prose. Many a Denver newspaperman, including Clyde Davis, credits "Judge" Beardshear with teaching him how to write. Refusing many tendered promotions, Beardshear as assistant city editor of both the *News* and the *Post* continued to smash adjectives and correct spelling for several generations of Denver reporters. He was quiet and kindly, qualities seldom specified in the form sheet on city desk jockeys, and in his off-duty time immersed himself in books and classical music on his phonograph.

Shortly after Clyde Davis came to the *News* staff in 1920 he was joined by almost the entire staff of the student newspaper, *The Silver and Gold*, at the University of Colorado: Gene Lindberg, Deane A. Dickason, Harvey Sethman, "Doc" Joe Markey, Sam Jackson, and Norman G. ("Shorty") Fuller. One other, Hal Borland, went east to the Associated Press. Today he is a much-admired nature essayist and novelist, and editorial writer for the *New York Times*.

The junior journalists had slipped a rowdy and ribald "scandal edition" of the student paper past the not too watchful eye of journalism professor Lee Casey and had been bounced from school. It no doubt amused the *News* editor to hire virtually the whole disgraced phalanx; schools of journalism were in low repute in those days. University faculties, it was widely held in city rooms, didn't know what was going on in the *practical* world, and moreover had no sense of humor when it came to boyish capers.

At the end of the academic year Casey resigned his faculty post in Boulder and returned to the *News*. He always said that his parting shot was: "You can't fire me; I resign." Clyde Davis writes:

The memory of Lee Casey needs no additional eulogy from me, but in my fairly wide experience I remember him as the most brilliant conversationalist I have ever known. He bullied me into reading hundreds of books I needed to read. I think he liked me because I was a good audience, and he kept me up all night many's the night talking history—early Roman, American, French—with or without a bottle.

When Lee became a columnist and editorial writer he occasionally felt too tired to produce and would implore me to help him out. I managed to imitate his style by throwing in a reference to Marcus Aurelius or Pliny the Younger now and then. But he was making a lot more money than I and this thing got to be an old story. I finally demanded \$2 for an editorial and \$5 for a column and got it, although he deplored my mercenary nature. One March night he came into the office very late and very tired and asked me to write an editorial on St.

Patrick's Day. I agreed for two bucks in advance, which he paid, and after the home edition was put to bed I went back in the morgue, looked up St. Patrick and boiled out a chunk of Celtic whimsy. A couple of days later Lee came up behind me and gave me a couple of thumbs in the ribs. "Congratulate me, Sure Shot," he said, and handed me a couple of pieces of paper clipped together. One was a note in pencil which read approximately, "Great work, Mike, old boy. You'll find a \$5 raise on your check next week—Jim." That was James A. Stuart, current Shaffer editor, who did not please Lee by calling him "Mike, old boy." The other paper was a letter to Mr. Stuart from the Royal Order of Hibernians, giving extravagant praise to the St. Patrick editorial.

What education I have came largely from Lee and from Judge Beardshear.

Shaffer's resident editorial director in Denver from February 1921 to March 1923 was James Arthur Stuart, who had served the Muncie *Star* and gone on to the Indianapolis *Star* as city and news editor between 1905 and 1921. Stuart came west with a reputation as a high-class operator, and he earned both the affection and respect of his staff. He, in turn, remembers it as "the best staff any newspaper ever had." One of his notable achievements was to help his fellow Indiana University alumnus, Jesse Newlon, build up the Denver public schools from their post-World War I slump. The *Post* was hurraing the taxpayers in a personal vendetta with schools Superintendent Newlon, who was labeled a tax-eater for wanting to build classrooms. Stuart threw the support of the *News-Times* to Newlon, and an eight-million-dollar bond issue was voted. Newlon later headed Columbia University's Teachers College.

When Stuart went back to Indianapolis in 1923 his admiring employees gave him a send-off with an acrostic:

S is for Sympathy, winning you friends,
T is our Trust that you'll gain all your ends,
U, Understanding has brought you success,
A is the Aims that your papers express,
R is for Right which you prize more than gold,
T is the Truth that you strive to uphold:

So here is a wish from the *News-Times* to you,
Happiness, health and prosperity too.

Stuart became managing editor of the Indianapolis *Star* and has been its editor since 1946.

Stuart's managing editor for the *News* was William C. Shanklin, and the frivolous Stanley K. Cochems had succeeded Frank Farrar in the opposite-number job for the day-side *Times*. Mary Coyle, Margaret Harvey, Helen Black, Mattie Durkee, and Helen C. Hine were among his newshens, and Eileen O'Connor was on the switchboard.

Clyde Davis was slot man—head of the copy desk; “slotterino,” he calls the job—from 1923 to 1929. Two of his rim men had connections of note. Lionel Moise moved to the *News* from the Kansas City *Star*, where, it was asserted by all *Star* men, he had taught Ernest Hemingway the writing trade. Then there was John Edward Francis Scott Key Fitzgerald—cousin of F. Scott Fitzgerald—who, critics said, had remained untaught.

Frederic Babcock, now literary editor of the *Chicago Tribune*, viewed the parade of such talent from the *Post* side of the fence and looks back on the Denver of that era as “one of the best training grounds for newspaper work—if you could stand the headlong pace there you could get a job anywhere in the country.” Babcock joined the *Post* staff in 1924 and soon became drama editor, with Betty Craig as his assistant. In the field of entertainment, he recalls that Denver was proud of her native sons Douglas Fairbanks and Paul Whiteman and gave its patronage liberally to the Denham Theater, where Gladys George played stock, and to the old wooden summer theater at Elitch’s Gardens, where Edward G. Robinson, Harold Lloyd, Fredric March, and other famous actors got their start or labored to perfect their art.

Denver to Babcock was “the most hospitable of cities” and the hospitality was not reserved for actors and musicians. “Every celebrity, political or otherwise, who came to town had to show up at our Denver Press Club before filling his other engagements. And woe unto him who failed to answer the summons. The staff members of the *News*, *Times*, *Post* and *Express* fraternized freely, and we didn’t look with favor on anybody who didn’t recognize our importance in the scheme of things.”

Some of Babcock’s contemporaries and Press Club companions—Casey, Davis, Lewis, and others—rode out the insane period when the Ku Klux Klan reigned in Colorado. The organization came to Colorado in 1920 and within a few years claimed to have signed up thirty thousand night-shirted loons under the leadership of Grand Dragon John Galen Locke, a physician and big-game hunter who looked like a fat Mephistopheles. The Klansmen, puffing big CYANA (Catholics, You Are Not Americans) cigars, exerted influence beyond their numbers. In the election of 1924 they took over city and state, installed nominally Republican Governor Clarence J. Morley in the Statehouse, and nominally non-partisan Mayor Benjamin F. Stapleton in City Hall. They controlled the legislature, dictated appointments in the Denver police department. Ida Libert Uchill, historian of the Jews in Colorado, says that at one point the Klan controlled a majority of the judges of the Denver District Court. “One Jewish and one Catholic lawyer worked for the Klan . . . either of these two lawyers had to be hired by the Jews or Catholics in order to receive any form of just treatment by the judges.”¹⁴

The Klan’s rise in Colorado never has been satisfactorily explained.

¹⁴Uchill, *op. cit.*, pp. 160–63.

Perhaps it is too soon for a dispassionate, non-libelous analysis. Some of the ex-kleagles still walk Denver streets in positions of influence, and one of the Klan's major political hatchet men, long a top official of the state GOP, died only recently. At any rate the "Kolorado Klavern" didn't have too much in common, so far as overt actions were concerned, with the Southern branch of the order. Its persecutions of minorities—Jews, Catholics, Negroes and, to a lesser extent, Spanish-Americans—were economic and social rather than physical. No lynchings ever were proved against the Klan—though it would have been difficult to do so, with police force, courts, and state officials enrolled or under domination. Fiery crosses were burned on top of Table Mountain and Ruby Hill, and one plan was laid to kidnap and castrate the independent and aggressive district attorney, Philip S. Van Cise. The operation was to be performed by a Klan surgeon under aseptic conditions but no anesthesia. Van Cise escaped by ramming his automobile into two pursuing machines.

Principally, however, the pleasant fellows bonded together in the Klan—many of them from the "better element"—seem to have been allied to line their own pockets, wield political control, and purge their mean little frustrations in orgies of "white supremacy." Then, of course, there was the social and cultural attraction of the women's fife and drum corps. Klansmen patronized a list of "approved" merchants and other businessmen on a reciprocal back-scratching basis, and boycotted the stores of Jews and Catholics.

The *News* shamefully climbed into bed with the Klan, though it did not endorse the hallucinations of its dogma. The *Post* took pot shots at targets of opportunity but was careful not to offend advertisers, many of whom were Klansmen or unwilling to buck the economically powerful group.

Only the small, budget-ridden Scripps-McRae *Express*—contemptuously referred to by the *Post* as "That Rooster on Mint Alley"—stood its ground. The *Express* fought the hooded nonsense with every bit of its not very robust strength, scolding, exposing, shaming, and satirizing. Its current editor was Sidney Whipple, a banty rooster fighter like his paper and later drama critic for the New York *World-Telegram*. His reporters dug out a roster of the Klan, heavy with important names, and the list of members was published in the *Express* for all the world to see. The exposed politicians and civic leaders could read their names from across the street. The *Express* recently had received a magazine of 18-point matrices for one of its Linotypes, and Whipple ordered the names set in the big type, eight columns wide. For its pains the *Express*, of course, was boycotted by advertisers, threatened, shot at from speeding automobiles, and boiled in oratory at "konklaves."

At the *News* the managing editor was an ardent white supremacist and a red-blooded Klansman, and the advertising department tried to walk on eggs. Many of the staff members laughed at the antics or were

indifferent. A few were in bitter opposition. City editor Eddie Day, a Catholic, planted one of his reporters into the Klan in order to receive private intelligences and to keep track of what his boss was up to. When the head national goon of the KKK paid a state visit to Denver he and his henchmen cornered Harry Rhoads in a suite at the Brown Palace and in relays tried to sweat him into membership. Day had to call on friendly Irish cops to spring his photographer loose from the trap.

By 1926, however, the Klan madness had run its course, although the lunatic die-hards attempted to keep the idea alive with Locke's Minute Men of America and something called the Order of Equals. The *News* was able to shake off its unsavory associations and concentrate its attentions on holding off the *Post*.

Shaffer and his methods were no match for the red-meat eaters of Champa Street. At a distance it appears that the Chicago grain man was totally dazzled and bemused by the fancy footwork of Tammen and Bonfils. When they weren't clouting him behind the ear from an unexpected quarter they had bribed the referee to hit him with the water bucket or a ring post. And when direct action seemed superfluous they just bluffed the former Sunday school teacher out of his britches. It had started at the very beginning.

When Shaffer bought the *Republican* he found himself with two valuable morning Associated Press franchises. The *Post* owned an afternoon franchise but had no AP service for its Sunday morning edition. Tammen tried to get Shaffer to release his excess morning privileges, but even Clean John saw what that would mean and refused to sell. The *Post* thereupon began printing coupons with which an aroused citizenry could petition Champa Street to provide a "live and worthwhile morning paper." After a few weeks of this Tammen paid a call on Shaffer. Gene Fowler supplies the dialogue in *Timber Line*:

Tammen: "How about selling us the Sunday AP franchise?"

Shaffer: "Oh, no. Be sensible."

Tammen: "That's all I wanted to know. Well, then, we're going to start a morning paper next Monday."

Shaffer: "You are joking."

Tammen: "Come here, kid, and look out your window. I want you to see something I brought over."

In the street below was a *Post* truck filled with small bundles of paper.

Tammen: "John, that truck is full of coupons we have received from Denver people, each one duly signed, imploring us to start a morning *Post*. Joking, eh?"

Shaffer (thoughtfully): "If you *really* intend to start a morning paper, I, of course, can't afford to have you enter a field which I myself narrowed by scrapping the *Republican*."

Tammen: "We can't afford it either, kid, but we'll do it."

Shaffer: "Here's what I'll do. I'll give you the Sunday AP rights, if you'll call off your plan for a morning *Post*."

Tammen: "Shake, kid. Now you're showing some sense."

Thus the *Post* acquired a franchise worth perhaps a hundred thousand dollars without laying out a cent, and Tammen went back to Champa Street chuckling. He and Bonfils had no intention of starting a morning paper at this time, and all but a few hundred of the coupons in the truck were blank sheets of newsprint cut up to proper size by *Post* clerks.

If it wasn't bluffs it was monkeys. To promote one of its stunts the *Post* turned loose a barrel of monkeys in the Statehouse. The simians climbed up inside the dome, unscrewed light bulbs, and peppered on-lookers five floors below. It was a mess, but it made people talk about, and by some irrational mechanism subscribe to, the *Post*. A talented vaudevillian stood in front of the *Post* building with a fork in his mouth and caught a turnip thrown from the twelfth floor of the Foster Building across the street. This, too, enhanced circulation. The Big Brother, champion of all his siblings everywhere, arranged for the deportation of an Italian peanut vendor in City Park who gave short weight to children and thereby touched Bon's tender heart.

And so it went, from bad to worse for the *News* and from big to bolder for the *Post*. There seemed to be no answer to the riddle, and the *News* took a licking.

Jake ("Humpy") Sobule and John Levand, a pair of geniuses, were in charge of street circulation for the *Post*. They conceived the notion that their newsies were frail, undernourished, and in need of healthful recreation. A heavily publicized health program was set up for the boys to build their bodies and redeem them from juvenile delinquency. The humanitarians of the city applauded enthusiastically, and then it developed that the sole activity of the *Post* "health farm" was instruction in the manly art. As the boys completed their course and acquired the rudiments it was casually suggested to them that there seemed to be no logical reason why newsies for the *News* and *Times*, particularly if smaller in stature, should have the unfair advantage of good locations on downtown corners. The toned-up *Post* boys got the idea, and *News* vendors got bloody noses.

The *Post* didn't miss a bet.

At last the awed Shaffer threw up his hands and fell back on Chicago, tottering, bruised in purse and sensibilities. He sold the *News* and *Times*, and the aggressively expanding Scripps-Howard organization came to town to try its luck as challenger.

Shaffer went home to his mansion in Evanston, where he died at ninety on October 5, 1943. Denver, he must have reflected in his declining years, had not been ready for clean, educational, uplifting journalism.

CHAPTER NINETEEN

Born to Survive

ACTION, NOT PROMISES, IS POLICY
OF NEWS, SAYS ROY W. HOWARD

SO READ the headline on Saturday, November 27, 1926. The best show in town the previous day had been a matinee performance at the Denver Chamber of Commerce. It commanded more interest, packed more drama than any hairbreadth, cliff-hanger serial then playing in the city's movie "palaces." Richard Dix was appearing in *The Quarterback*, and the Hall-Mills case was getting the banner lines. But the star Denver wanted to see and hear more about was Roy Wilson Howard. The mystery of the preacher and his choir leader diminished before the question of what was to become of the *Rocky Mountain News*. The town had been buzzing since Tuesday.

At noon on Friday three hundred of the city's leading businessmen crowded into the Chamber of Commerce luncheon room to hear what the aggressive, high-powered, and dapper man from New York would say.

The copyreader who later handled the story wrote a sour head. He could have done much better. Possibly he was working under wraps; there hadn't been opportunity yet to gauge the likes and dislikes of the new boss in the matter of headlines. So he played it with caution.

Actually Howard delivered a headline writer's dream of a speech. It was short, to the point, and left 'em laughing. The talk, Gene Fowler says, "was as sweet an uppercut as anyone had cheered since the days of Bob Fitzsimmons." Howard stood up, paid his respects to Chamber President Richard M. Crane, and let fly in staccato, rapid-fire bursts:

We're coming in here neither with a tin cup nor a lead pipe.
We will live with and in this community and not on or off it.
We are nobody's big brother, wayward sister, or poor relation.

You are probably not concerned with where we come from, but we can assure you that whenever we go back we will be welcome. [A chop at Bonfils' lack of popularity in Kansas City and various points in Oklahoma.]

The *Rocky Mountain News*, conceived in high ideals and public spiritedness, was born to be a survivor.

Our obligation to you is to give you newspapers that in news coverage, entertaining features and sound editorial policies are equal to any in the United States. . . .

We come here simply as news merchants. We're here to sell advertising and sell it at a rate profitable to business houses.

But first we must produce a newspaper with news appeal that will result in a circulation to make that advertising effective.

We will run no lottery. [Another dig, and fully appreciated.]

We seek no downfall of competition. We feel the field in Denver is favorable for clean competition of the sort that makes for news service of the highest type. . . .

We have sense of humor enough to know that a challenger never looks as good as a champion—before the fight.

Then he sat down. The room rocked with laughter and quivered in anticipation of the bloodletting. Howard couldn't have issued a bolder invitation to battle if he had stridden a couple of blocks down Champa Street and tossed a brick through the window of the Bucket of Blood. He knew exactly what he was doing, and the reaction was not long in coming.

The fresh turning point in the career of the *News* came on November 22, 1926. Preliminary negotiations had been a well-kept secret, but on that day Roy Howard, as chairman of the board of the Scripps-Howard Newspapers, and John C. Shaffer sat down in Denver and completed the deal. The purchase was announced next morning in the *News*, which said the price was "approximately \$1,000,000," for which Scripps-Howard acquired both the *News* and the *Times*. The organization, its name changed from Scripps-McRae in 1923, already was publishing the *Denver Express*.

The consideration, in more precise figures, was \$750,000—\$300,000 in cash, \$450,000 in assumed bonds. Correspondence between Roy Howard and W. W. Hawkins at the time indicates that the initial plan was to buy only the afternoon *Times*. Most Scripps-Howard papers, then and since, have been P.M. journals. But Shaffer wanted to get out of Denver, absolutely and forever, and he pressed for a package deal. He had tried to bargain with another purchaser at \$1,200,000, but it was no sale.

Advertising lineage indicates that Shaffer's two papers were grossing close to two million dollars a year in revenues, plus approximately half a million in annual circulation receipts, but he was taking no profit. The costs of scrapping with the *Post* were not small ones, and the moral exercise he was getting as conductor of a non-profit operation in clean journalism didn't balance off well against the personal vilification he was taking. He was anxious to sell. Howard met first with Shaffer in Chicago early in October, indicated a lukewarm interest, and made a tentative offer of \$750,000 of which \$250,000 would be cash and \$500,000 in assumed obligations. Shaffer wrote October 14 proposing \$300,000

cash plus the assumption of \$600,000 of the \$708,000 bonds outstanding. He pleaded that even this would leave him with a \$250,000 loss in the deal. Howard stuck to his \$750,000 offer in a letter on October 20 but was willing to go to \$300,000 cash. He argued that this was "a rather high price to pay for the privilege of getting into a fight that is so certain to be very expensive, very long drawn out and probably never very profitable from a monetary standpoint." Shaffer gave his preliminary agreement in a letter on November 6 and arrangements were made for the November 22 meeting in Denver. He was squeaking through with a net of \$42,000 in his wallet. Perhaps he felt that, all things considered, he was lucky to be getting out of Denver with a whole shirt.

In the preliminary planning for Scripps-Howard expansion in Denver the *Rocky Mountain News* once again narrowly side-stepped extinction.

Robert Paine Scripps, third son of the founder, at this point was editorial director of the organization and president of the E. W. Scripps Company. He surveyed the Denver situation and made an acute report to Howard in a letter dated September 28, 1926. It was he who suggested that the *Times* only be bought from Shaffer, or, as an alternative, \$300,000 be spent on the *Express* to promote it. The *Express* either should be closed down or resuscitated. He wrote:

The *Express* is the only newspaper outfit in town that has not been definitely and publicly connected with one or more scandalous financial and political deals. In other words we have a monopoly on whatever virtue may exist in the journalistic profession in Denver. But this is a foundation to build on and not a house anybody can live in.

Scripps recalled that sometime earlier there had been discussion of the possibility of putting Carl Magee, the scrappy editor of the Albuquerque *Tribune* who had uncovered much of the Teapot Dome mess, or "some other spectacular editor" in command of the *Express* to tear into Bonfils with a personal fight. As an afterthought Scripps wrote Howard, "I am of the opinion that there is nothing we could say, or prove, about the Post or Bonfils that would especially interest the people of Denver. There is nothing that would not be an old story to them. The only way I think we can win in Denver is by putting out a really good and adequate newspaper."

The total advertising and circulation gross of the *Express* then was about \$200,000 annually, but Bob Scripps had a loyalty to the paper his father had started. He proposed a plan under which the *News* would be reduced to a six-day paper and then, after about a year, be sold or permitted to die. The two "lame ducks"—the *Express* and the *Times*—would be put together, and their Sunday edition would replace that of the *News*. Scripps examined Denver circulation records carefully and shrewdly observed that the *Post's* sales in the far corners of the West,

much heralded by the "League of Rocky Mountain States" (a Post-conceived *entente* which existed only in Bon's mind), actually was a liability to local retail advertisers. Subscribers in the Black Hills of South Dakota didn't do much for the merchant on Sixteenth Street except raise his advertising rates. The *Times* had 17,374 city and suburban subscribers and the *Express* 13,046 (out of total circulations of 24,521 and 14,533 respectively). Combining the two would give the *Express-Times* a local readership of 30,410, a figure which might be built up to challenge the Post's 82,672 local subscribers (out of 161,154 total). In any event the much higher percentage of locally concentrated circulation could be made a talking point for ad salesmen on their lonely rounds. Scripps thought it was worth a college try. Events failed to follow his blueprint, however, and of the four newspapers involved only the sinewy *News* and the blustering *Post* showed staying power.

When Shaffer and Howard got down to dollars in their bargaining Scripps gave his approval to the purchases, indicating that the top price he was willing to pay was \$750,000, though he thought \$500,000 a lot more reasonable.

The men who met in Denver November 22, 1926, to put their signatures to the deal had known each other slightly for a long time. Roy Howard grew up in Indianapolis, and from 1903 to 1905 he had been sports editor for the Indianapolis *Star*.¹ This, however, was before Shaffer owned the *Star*.

There cannot have been much community of interest at the bargaining table that November day. Shaffer, at seventy-three, was retiring from the battle, beaten. He hadn't been really interested in newspapers anyway; he was a financier, a highly successful speculator, and the press was merely an auxiliary cog in his power complex. To the young man on the other side of the table news and newspapers were everything. Howard, at forty-three, was filled with the expansive self-confidence of a man who is on his way to the top and knows it. The first impression he left on his new Denver employees was that of a man so loaded with energy and optimism that he couldn't sit still; he seemed to fidget, to skitter when he walked.

Howard's previous ten days had been busy ones. In addition to the *News* and *Times*, he bought in that period the Memphis *News-Scimitar* and the Knoxville *Sentinel*. The Memphis paper had been merged with the Scripps-Howard *Press* there, and the *Sentinel* with the Knoxville *News*, also a prior member of the Scripps group. With the purchase of the *News-Times* the organization now stood at twenty-five daily newspapers, the largest string in the country, and it was purposefully and self-consciously at spring tide. Before the next year was out Howard would invade New York City by acquiring the *Telegram*.

¹John H. Sorrells, *A Handbook of Scripps Howard* (Memphis, 1948), pp. 72-80.

In Denver, the *News* announced on November 23, the *Times* and the *Express*, both afternoon papers, would be merged to form the *Denver Evening News*, appearing nightly six days a week. The venerable *News* would continue as a morning paper, daily and Sunday.

John Shaffer's final statement, published on page one beneath the announcement of the purchase and merger, hints the pathos of a wealthy father's vanished hopes for a dead son. "When I purchased the *News* and *Times*," he wrote, "my son, Mr. Kent Shaffer, lived here and was in reasonably good health, and it was my intention to give the papers to him so that he would eventually come into possession of the property and management." But Kent Shaffer died, and "hence there is no one in my family that desires to own and operate the papers." Then Shaffer bestowed his blessing on Roy Howard and quit the field.

On the editorial page the new management declared itself further under the heading, "Denver's Newspaper Merger—The Meaning":

In a newspaper sense, Denver is unique.

For years this great city has been marked journalistically by one large and three comparatively small daily publications. The trend has been more and more toward a monopoly by the largest, the *Denver Post*, published by F. G. Bonfils. . . .

That trend has threatened Denver for some time with a newspaper dictatorship. Such a situation is attributable to a number of causes.

First, the very agile and very adroit publishing ability of F. G. Bonfils, who, by one means or another, has been able to force his newspaper ahead in a divided field.

Second, an over-crowded competitive condition that has made possible the growth of one newspaper at the expense of the others. That condition could be corrected by only one process—a merger such as that which has now been brought about.

We believe that a dictatorship of Denver's newspaper field by the *Denver Post* would be nothing less than a blight, and we believe, furthermore, that because of recent developments the time is ripe for challenging that dictatorship. Hence the merger and the pledge that the resources of the Scripps-Howard organization are behind this move to correct what we consider a sinister journalistic situation. . . .

The Scripps-Howard organization is prepared to spend whatever is required. It knows the price and is ready to pay it.

IT IS HERE TO STAY. . . .

The editorial went on to promise the city a day-by-day betterment in the quality of the twins soon to become known as "the *NEWS*papers."

In a signed editorial on November 24 the erudite Scot, James H. MacLennan, recently honored with a doctorship of letters by the University of Colorado, gave a generous and graceful farewell to the former owner. Shaffer, he wrote, had been a net gain for the city and

state with his "high ideals" and the "religious atmosphere" that "permeated his editorial policies." But the new owners, MacLennan asserted, would lead the citizenry

OUT OF BONDAGE

The people of Denver today may be likened to the children of Israel escaping from the bondage of the Egyptian, and the people of this city have before them now "the pillar of a cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night" to guide them and protect them; and they know not that they are safe in their goings and comings and there is nothing for them to be afraid of so long as they walk uprightly before God and man. . . .

Editor & Publisher, the trade journal, was of approximately the same opinion though somewhat less biblical in overtone. "War is on at Denver," *E&P* said December 4.

. . . Denver long has been represented as living under the cloud of contemptible journalism. . . . These stories [about Bonfils and his *Post*] have been used to justify practically every assault that has been made upon the honor of the American press. The shame and humiliation of them has become a part of the consciousness of every sincere journalist. . . .

It was a holy crusade out there in the West to cleanse the souls of conscientious journalists everywhere, and the trade journal was betting its money on Scripps and Howard. It predicted a "short and sanguinary" war and a "new deal for the community."

The *News*, modesty aside, republished the *Editor & Publisher* comments on December 10, and throughout the week following the purchase it, too, had hammered at the theme of a new era for Denver. On November 25 there was a page-one cartoon by James Lynch showing "Father Denver" serving up a roast turkey labeled "Clean Constructive Journalism." Shaffer had promised much the same thing thirteen years earlier, but this time there was a difference: the new owners had come to town expecting and ready for a knock-down, drag-out brawl.

Next day there was a full-page house ad heralding "A New Deal in Denver" and reprinting an *Evening News* editorial which had reviewed the paper's proud history and pointed with pride to "An Unbroken Tradition." Nearby was a coupon which subscribers could clip and send in to get the evening paper at forty cents a month, evening with Sunday for sixty cents, or the morning and Sunday for seventy cents. "WATCH US GROW!" was the tag line on the ad.

The editions of Sunday, November 28, reprinted the original editorial statement, and there was another cartoon by Lynch. This time it was

a robed woman tagged "Independent Press." The lady was armed vigilantly with a naked sword, "Facts," but in the background appeared a handsome rainbow across which streamed "The Rocky Mountain News . . . The Denver Evening News . . . Scripps-Howard Merger" in promise of a better world to be. Page eight was given over to a biography and large picture of E. W. Scripps surrounded by columns of "What Other Colorado Newspapers Think of Merger." A typically bellicose comment came from the crusty Boulder *Daily Camera*, which never wasted any affection on Bonfils:

. . . Remains to be seen if the Scripps-Howard syndicate can revive The News. . . . We hope the new owners will win. God knows Colorado needs a newspaper at the capital.

On the facing page an eight-column line, "Scripps-Howard a Romance of American Journalism," appeared over an article which sought to explain what kind of an outfit this was that moved with such reckless self-confidence into the dragon's lair. Photos of Roy Howard and other Scripps-Howard and *News* officials illustrated the article. Shown were G. B. ("Deac") Parker, Scripps-Howard editorial director; William G. Chandler, then head of the Ohio group of Scripps papers; Thomas L. Sidlo, Scripps' Cleveland attorney, who had helped close the deal; L. E. Judd, editor of the Akron, Ohio, *Times-Express*; Tom Dowling, circulation director for the organization; R. E. ("Josh") Wilson, who had edited the Denver *Express* in its last days; James H. MacLennan, editorial writer for the *News*; E. C. Day, assistant managing editor of the *News-Times*; George Sanford Holmes, *News-Times* managing editor; Walden E. Sweet, the crack reporter who had been managing editor of the *Express*; and a young Lee Taylor Casey, listed as *Times* editorial writer.

This was a part of the task force being assembled to engage the *Post*. Even more fire power would be added as the days and weeks advanced.

Several factors combined to make a fight in Denver seem like a good idea at the time. In the first place Scripps-Howard was in a period of major expansion. New papers were being founded or purchased, and soon the organization would be functioning from the Atlantic to the Pacific, Ohio to Alabama, a strong force in American journalism. A buoyant spirit of vital growth and high destiny hummed in the ranks. New worlds were in flux, and worlds were made for conquest. "Raise your sights!" was the going phrase. Moreover Denver appeared to be a likely spot for one of the expansion moves because of the experience with the local situation well earned over the years in keeping the *Express* afloat against devastating odds. This would be no sally by strangers into the dark alleys of a far city; nobody was green, and no one had the slightest expectation that Bonfils would roll over and play dead.

Another factor lay in the United Press. The wire service also was growing, and Howard wanted to establish its dominance. Aside from Albuquerque, Denver was the only active spot in the West linked to the UP network. A strong newspaper was needed in Denver to back up UP's efforts to cover a large, remote, but often newsworthy region where nearly all the local newspapers were members of the rival Associated Press. The UP was Howard's baby. He had sired it in 1907 when he was a twenty-four-year-old stripling and his only material interest a single ten-dollar share of common stock.² And he had built it, Louis M. Lyons has written, in his own image: "fast, enterprising, ingenious, dramatic, innovating."³ The United Press had a world to win in Denver too.

"The UP was not established to be a second-class AP," Howard says. "I hoped to produce what I had wanted when I was a telegraph editor: a service which would be as human, vital and pulsating as a good local newspaper. We wanted to cover, not the routine and the cut-and-dried, but to get at the individual involved in an event and his motivations, often more interesting than the event itself. Our aim was to concentrate on personality and motivations. The more the AP clucked, the more we scratched. I also wanted a great international press association to tell the U.S. story throughout the world. It then was being told very poorly abroad by means of rewrites in the more or less official services such as Reuters and Havas."

The very practical matter of improving UP coverage was part of it, but an element of high-minded, crusading zeal also went into the decision to buy the *News-Times*. E. W. Scripps had died only a few months earlier, in March, on his yacht off the Liberian coast, and he bequeathed to his newspapers a bold and vigorous liberal tradition of iconoclasm, equality of opportunity, and political independence. His heretical notions about the dignity of the workingman and the rights of union labor were very much in the minds of leaders of the organization in the autumn of 1926. The same heritage, a decade later, would put Scripps-Howard in the forefront of the fight for Franklin D. Roosevelt and the early New Deal. Reminiscing with friends recently, Howard recalled that he and his top-level associates were disturbed and worried by the "bitter reaction" which seized American political and economic thinking during the lush regime of Calvin Coolidge. The country, it seemed to them, needed more papers of courage and integrity that could raise hell constructively in the Scrippsian fashion. Howard ran his finger down a directory of newspapers and stopped at Denver. *There* was a vital and growing city, capital of the burgeoning West, in which a

²The fifty-year history of the United Press is told by Joe Alex Morris in *Deadline Every Minute* (New York, 1957).

³*New York Times Book Review*, Nov. 10, 1957.

Scripps burr under the saddle seemed calculated to produce beneficial results for all concerned.

Howard puts it this way:

"Why Denver? Well, in the first place the Coolidge administration was on. Scripps-Howard was proud of its liberalism. The economy was on the upgrade, and we couldn't get anyone interested in liberal politics. Bob Scripps and I got the idea that the firm had expanded and was a success and that everyone seemed to be interested only in making money. We felt we owed it to ourselves and the memory of the old man and our position in journalism to make a fight for what we believed in.

"The Shaffer papers were in no sense progressive. They were old-line Black Republican with a Mark Hanna philosophy—and Shaffer had as much business tackling Bon and Tam as I Jim Jeffries.

"In a moment of weakness or aberration, I went through the list for the toughest city spot where there would be an opportunity for Scripps-Howard journalism, a place to justify our existence. My success in finding the toughest spot was phenomenal. At any rate, we decided Denver was an ideal place to demonstrate our tradition by making an expenditure in the public service. We had intended a reasonably generous contribution. We got much more than we bargained for."

Like the *News* itself, Scripps-Howard carried with it an inheritance of toughness and durability, a disposition to challenge the *status quo*, and a well-earned good name. In neither case was the character casually acquired. The *News* had earned its reputation by long and faithful service and by enduring multiple disasters, including Bonfils and Tammen. That of Scripps-Howard rested on the foundation of a powerful and compelling personality.

Edward Wyllis Scripps was born June 18, 1854, at Rushville, Illinois, the thirteenth child of an emigrant English bookbinder. He grew up on his father's farm there, a strange and special sort of boy whose acute rationalizations foreshadowed the man. Ritually, farm boys have many chores, but young Scripps would sit in a fence corner reading books and bossing other youths he employed to do his work. The neighbors called him lazy. He regarded himself, then and always, as a realist. Why should he spend his time and energies on labor when he could employ others to do the work, take a profit on the management, and free his hours for the matters of intellect and spirit which were his main concern? To him this was not a Tom Sawyer brand of canniness or trickery but only a sensible, intelligent ordering of human existence. His family was not well to do, and it had required planning and thrift to accumulate the capital which permitted him to employ labor rather than expend it. The executive urge sprouted early and went on to full flower. Yet Scripps never was the idle and patrician overseer. He drove himself mercilessly, and twice during his lifetime worked himself into physical breakdowns by long hours, close attention to multitudinous detail, and a consuming

ambition which he never was able fully to justify in his own philosophically inclined mind.

E.W., as he was always called, broke into the newspaper business at eighteen as a six-dollar-a-week collector for the *Detroit News*, founded by his older brother, James E. The family sank every penny it had into the paper, and gradually it began to prosper. E.W. worked his way up to city editor but he wasn't happy. He wanted independence, and he was constitutionally, emotionally, and in every other way unsuited for the role of employee. So with \$10,000 capital he set up in business for himself in Cleveland. On November 2, 1878, the first number of his *Penny Press* appeared.⁴ (The "Penny" was dropped from the name November 10, 1884.)

There were several things distinctive about the *Penny Press*. In the first place it sold for half the price of its competitors, and there were only two other one-cent papers in the country, the *New York Daily News* and the *Chicago Daily News*. Secondly, it was for the laboring man, full-faced and stridently, at a time when most employers took better care of their draft horses than their workers. Then, to top it all, the *Press* was independent politically. Nearly every other paper in the nation was a party organ, wholly committed one way or the other, hewing to the line through bad candidates or sour issues. Scripps declared in his first issue:

We have no politics, that is, in the sense of the word as commonly used. We are not Republican, not Democrat, not Greenback, and not Prohibitionist. We simply intend to support good men and condemn bad ones, support good measures and condemn bad ones, no matter what party they belong to. We shall tell no lies about persons or policies for love, malice, or money. It is no part of a newspaper's business to array itself on the side of this or that party, or fight, lie, or wrangle for it. The newspaper should simply present all the facts the editor is capable of obtaining concerning men and measures before the bar of the public and then, after having discharged its duty as a witness, be satisfied to leave the jury in the case—the public—to find the verdict. . . .

Against all contrary predictions, the *Press* made its way. Once it did, Scripps lost interest. He spent a lifetime, and amassed a fortune, managing successful newspaper properties by remote control and devoting most of his energy to attempts at squeezing shoestring operations into success by forcing them to turn a profit. Scripps played the percentages, and he had a couple favorite ones. His papers were always edited for the ninety-five per cent of the population that lived on wages and sweat. The rich five per cent could expect nothing from him. The second percentile maxim was equally hard-nosed: each dollar of invest-

⁴Dick McLaughlin, *From Humble Beginnings* . . . (Cleveland, 1953), pp. 4ff.

ment was to yield fifteen cents annually in net profit. A new newspaper was given a modest capitalization, a minimum of equipment, frequently secondhand, and pushed off the dock to sink or swim. By the time its first anniversary rolled around the journal was expected to be in the black, or to shave operating expenses until it was. It was Scripps' theory that a newspaper enterprise should be starved into making money, and that, once the fifteen per cent return was made, anything extra could be plowed back into the business for expansion.

Scripps enjoyed picturing himself as a skinflint. But he constantly exhorted employees to organize themselves into unions and bargain with him, or any other employer, for higher pay and better working conditions. At one point the business manager of a Scripps paper discovered that a young circulation employee had tapped the till for four thousand dollars. The manager proudly wired E.W. that the sum had been made good by taking a mortgage on the home of the boy's mother. Scripps fired a telegram back: "You will not prosecute. You will at once cancel mortgage. You will put \$4000 loss in your profit and loss statement, due to damned poor management."

From Cleveland, Scripps branched out to the St. Louis *Chronicle*, the Cincinnati *Post*, and thence to a total of forty-four daily newspapers scattered over the map of America. It is said this was more newspapers than any other man before or since has founded, purchased, or controlled. Milton A. McRae became his partner, and the chain of papers took the name of the Scripps-McRae League in 1889. The League founded the two Colorado Scripps papers, the Denver *Express* and the Pueblo *Sun*. The latter was one of the unfortunates that never learned to swim. In 1920, Roy W. Howard was made chairman of the board of the Scripps-McRae organization at the direct order of E.W. Soon thereafter the name was switched to Scripps-Howard. E.W. by now had retired from active management, and his son Robert P. took over as editorial director.

E.W. set down three paramount rules for his newspapers: that they must make a profit, that they must champion the workingman, and—though he was not notably or formally a religious man—that they should obey the Ten Commandments. There were elaborations, of course, and personal "disquisitions" on policy to the editors, but these were the fundamental precepts.

Despite his insistence on profit making, Scripps was interested primarily in the editorial policies, rather than the business affairs, of his papers. He felt, indeed, that an editorial position favorable to and supported by his ninety-five per cent was the *only* route to financial success. Thus he established a policy, still in effect in the Scripps-Howard organization, which makes the editor of any paper the superior of the business manager and final authority on any disputed issue. It was, he said, the "etiquette" of Scripps papers that an approach to the editorial department should never be made through the advertising office. Scripps

editors also were assigned the responsibility of censoring their advertising columns. All of these accomplishments, individually and in bulk, served to strengthen and advance the position of a free and independent press.

In another way, too, Scripps' cranky individualism and distant control freed the hand of his own and competing editors in cities across the land. Scripps spent most of his time on his Miramar estate outside San Diego, where he was inaccessible to pressures and impervious to callers who might slip through the gates with subornation on their busy minds. On his own papers he conferred freedom from the designs of local politicians, editing advertisers, and "the interests." Where one paper was free it became more difficult to whipsaw the others.

In addition to newspapers Scripps also established supply lines to sustain them. He laid the groundwork for the United Press, which provided a source of national and international news for papers shut out by the then cozy and exclusive policies of the Associated Press. The first great daily newspaper feature service, the Newspaper Enterprise Association, was a Scripps creation in 1902. His own lifetime interest in science led in 1920 to the establishment and endowment of Science Service, the initial sustained effort at expert reporting of scientific news.

Outside the field of journalism Scripps' scientific bent led him to establish and finance, with his older sister Ellen, the Scripps Institution of Oceanography of the University of California, and the Scripps Foundation for Population Research at Miami University in Ohio.

Probably Scripps was a genius. Certainly he was a glorious old Tartar, one of the giants of his era. In nearly every respect he was an extraordinary man, and it must have been difficult, at least, to work or live with him as associate or employee. His ferocious individualism and unorthodox methods brought him great wealth. This permitted him to cultivate his will, which was strong, and his eccentricities, which were numerous. Like many another vital and highly energized man, E.W. regarded all those who were not geared up to his ratio as lazy, stupid, or perverse. He was egotistical—with gnawing self-doubts, frankly confessed to. His specialty was the achieving of goals—only to question, in the end, whether they were what he really wanted.

A voracious reader, Scripps sampled the full range of literature from theology to demography, and his restless mind was stocked with an eclectic knowledge which made it possible for him to converse freely and to the point with lawyers and scientists, sculptors and muckrakers. Emotionally, he was sympathetic; intellectually, a logician and cynic. He shunned the limelight and was so little known that he gleefully recalled many occasions on which his partner McRae was publicly recognized as Mr. Scripps. He had no taste for the social pleasures, the attitudes, or the company of other rich men. He wore rough clothes, boots, and a little black skullcap much like a rabbi's. Cigar ashes dribbled on his vest, and his language often was vehemently inelegant. He enjoyed horses

and yachts, and owned a number of each. For the last four years of his life his 180-foot motor yacht *Ohio* was his home. He died aboard the *Ohio* off Monrovia on the night of March 12, 1926, after a dinner and good conversation over cigars in the shipboard library. He was just short of his seventy-second birthday. The last order he left was that he be buried at sea.⁵

Despite parental pressures Bob Scripps never really wanted to become a newspaper executive. As a young man in his late teens he pictured himself as a writer and essayist on literary, intellectual, and aesthetic levels, and a poet. He even published one small volume of his poems. He was a friend of Jack London and other California writers of his time, and his father encouraged him in the literary life. At the same time E.W. was a frank critic: the verses were pretty puny, he wrote, and the output was too small. Bob wasn't sticking with it intensely enough. Get to work, the father advised; find yourself. Stop playing the dilettante. The son was sensitive, generous, sympathetic, and for a time called himself a socialist. One of his poems is entitled "Song of a Soil Slave." He tried the newspaper business from both within and without the Scripps concern, and he sampled other occupations, including roughnecking in the California oil fields, where all of his pay for one season went to help out a fellow worker who had broken his leg in an accident. Bob was still in his teens, and his father was constantly prodding him, demanding that he hurry up and mature, settle down and come into the business. In his very early twenties the son began to take hold, understudying his father at Miramar. When World War I brought E.W. out of retirement Bob went with him to Washington and at twenty-one was made editor in chief of the Scripps papers. E.W. retired again in 1922 and turned over the controlling interest in his newspaper empire to Bob.

Those who knew Bob Scripps always speak first of him as a thoroughgoing gentleman, altruistic, soft-spoken, kindly. He was "generous to a fault," Roy Howard says, and "couldn't tell a lie if he wanted to." Bill Chandler speaks of him as "a big man in personality" with "marvelous patience and restraint." He reposed great confidence in his associates and employees, Chandler says, and "never butted in." He "carried to the limit the putting of responsibility on local managers, and he had a great ability to size up men and properties." Bob Scripps was the planner and student, gave few orders, and made little show of his authority. His principal exercise of power was in the appointment of editors. He visited the *News* plant in Denver many times, but always without throwing his weight around. He was a family man, lived simply, and remembered first names. Bob was a big man, over six feet and burly, and he walked with a slightly hunched, rolling ease. Like his father, he died at sea, sailing a ketch in Matamoros Bay in March of 1938. He is buried at

⁵For a full-scale biography see Negley D. Cochran, *E. W. Scripps* (New York, 1933).

Miramar among the eucalyptus trees he helped plant as a boy.

On the foundation E.W. laid down, and with the quiet support of Bob Scripps in the background, Roy Howard built monuments to the founder's vision and his own unflagging industry and dedication. But the metaphor is not really an apt one. Nothing about Roy Howard's dazzling career has been stolid or heavy with immobility, and he erects no showy pillars to his own or anyone else's vanity. The key words are energy, action, and dash. The equilibrium is not that of mass at heavy rest but of force in sustained motion.

Roy Howard was born January 1, 1883, in Gano, Ohio, and grew up in Indianapolis. He went to work early to support his widowed mother. He ran dancing classes in high school to help out, and as high school correspondent for the Indianapolis *News* he earned as much as thirty-five dollars a week at space rates. His bosses counted the days until his graduation so they could promote him to full-time reporter at eight dollars. He augmented his income by secretly carrying three paper routes. The young Roy, who had wanted to be a surgeon, was loaded with drive, brass, and impatience with oldsters who already were getting in his way. Within a few months he was sports editor of the Indianapolis *Star*, and before he was twenty-three he was holding down the assistant telegraph editor's slot on the St. Louis *Post-Dispatch*. He quit when he was passed over for promotion in favor of a man of thirty.

"They've just appointed an old crock with a beard to the job I should have had," he wrote a friend, Ray Long, managing editor of Scripps' Cincinnati *Post*. "Do you have a job for me?"⁶

Roy had taken a vacation in 1904 and gone to New York, where he tried to get on the staff of the *World* but was blocked at the reception desk. "If I had got by that receptionist," he mused recently, "I might today be reading copy on the *World* instead of being its editor." He went to the *Post-Dispatch* on January 1, 1905, and remembers O. K. Bovard as "probably the greatest city editor ever, but a cold son of a bitch." His telegram to Ray Long produced results, and he joined the Cincinnati *Post* as assistant managing editor, a position seldom granted to a youngster. But he was eager for the big time in New York. He persuaded the Scripps-McRae League that it needed a metropolitan correspondent and that he was the man for the job. He got it. When Publishers' Press was purchased by Scripps in 1906, Roy, who now had been eligible to vote for two full years, was made its manager. He made of it his first major achievement; for the hastily organized, makeshift Publishers' Press soon evolved into the world-wide United Press.

The Publishers' Press was flung together because Scripps and a few other newspaper titans in the afternoon field feared a news monopoly by the recently organized Associated Press, a membership organization

⁶Morris, op. cit., p. 24.

whose rules for admittance had many of the characteristics of an exclusive men's club. All the Scripps-McRae papers were afternoon sheets, and E.W. charged that the AP was discriminating against the P.M.s in favor of the big morning journals which had been instrumental in organizing the non-profit, co-operative news service. To break the monopoly Scripps merged the Publishers' Press with his own Scripps-McRae Press Association and an even smaller service linking his Pacific coast papers called the Scripps News Association. The new organization, named the United Press Associations, sent out its first telegraphic report on July 15, 1907, and the man in operating charge—at thirty-three dollars a week—was news manager Roy Howard. In the Scripps pattern, UP was a profit-making outfit. It would sell its news to all comers who had the price, and there were 369 of them on the first day.

As his life moved toward its close E.W. totted up scores and decided that his major contribution to American journalism had been the organization of United Press. He had forestalled monopoly control over the free flow of information. Any publisher—or anyone who wanted to start a new journal—had available to him a source of national and international news. He could not be silenced by the franchise system of the AP, which allotted one morning and one afternoon membership to each city.

Scripps' money and vision created United Press, but the man who built it to the point where it would realize aspirations—and yield revenues—was the terrier-busy Roy Howard. The physical size of the young news manager was no gauge of his ambition, capacities, or drive. Or his self-confidence. The story is told of Howard's first meeting with Scripps at the Miramar ranch. E.W. had several other visitors that day, by coincidence all of them small men, and Howard was kept waiting. Finally he was ushered into the presence.

"My God!" commented Scripps. "Another *little* one?"

Howard was undismayed and unawed. "Well, Mr. Scripps," he said, "perhaps another little one, but this time a *good* one."

Scripps eyed his visitor with new interest. "Hmm," he chuckled. "Well, for one thing, you'll never lick anybody's boots."

Howard whipped the new organization into life, pushing, crowding, cutting corners, lashing himself equally with his skeleton crew of over-worked and underpaid reporters. Sometimes he personally would dictate bulletin stories directly to the telegraph operators. Typewriters were too slow for the pace at which he wanted UP to operate. By 1912, Howard was elected chairman of the board of directors. The following year he was made president.

From Miramar and his yacht Scripps was watching the rapid rise and the canny feats of the young man to whom he gave free rein and with

⁷Morris, op. cit., pp. 26-27.

whom he was almost never in direct communication. What he saw was convincing. In 1920, when the Scripps string of papers was reorganized, E.W. persuaded Howard to leave the presidency of United Press and become general manager of the Scripps-McRae League and assistant chairman of the board of the E. W. Scripps Company. The switch was not an easy one for Howard, even though the shape of the future was by now more or less apparent. The breakneck pace, the constant demands, and the instantaneous decisions of the United Press were the very zest of living to Howard, who throughout his long career has insisted upon regarding himself as a reporter rather than an executive. He wanted to be a writing reporter but somehow always wound up bossing the operation. He was promoted to board chairman only a few months after he joined the League.

Three years after Howard transferred primary allegiance from the Scripps news service to the Scripps papers themselves, his name was added to the masthead, E.W. retired, and Howard began a new life at forty as president and board chairman of the Scripps-Howard Newspapers. He turned over the chairmanship to William W. Hawkins in 1936 but continued as president until 1953, when his son Jack succeeded him. In the thirty years he built the organization into an operation which grossed \$140,000,000 in 1952 from a press association and news picture service (United Press), three radio and three television stations, two newspaper syndicates (NEA and United Features), and nineteen newspapers with a total circulation of more than 4,000,000 copies daily. During 1925, the last full year of Scripps' life, receipts totaled \$28,000,000. Howard not only discharged faithfully the trust E.W. placed in him but went on to build higher, farther, and more solidly than the founder had dreamed.

The public personality of Roy Howard has been a controversial one. His brash energies often tire and occasionally annoy both acquaintances and associates. His much-discussed reverence for budgets has served sometimes to wring dry and sap the morale of competent and loyal employees, but criticism of the Scripps-taught close-fistedness comes most freely, of course, from persons unburdened by the responsibility of maintaining financial health in a huge and high-cost economic complex. His policies, methods, and politics have been questioned and disputed, and giants are seldom without their detractors, but Howard's personal integrity is unchallenged, and there's no wishy-washiness. Once he has taken a stand no one is left with any doubts about what it is.

Strangely enough Howard's decisions are not overriding in the Scripps-Howard organization, although it would be odd indeed if they were not highly respected on their flat record of success. A large measure of autonomy exists for local editors. They ballot, for example, on which presidential candidate the organization will support, and they have a free hand in local endorsements. In the top echelon of the general manage-

ment internal policies take shape out of free, and on occasion heated, discussion. Candor is a commodity freely dispensed but seldom received by high officialdom in any industry, yet Howard demands and gets it.

In fact some of the frankest evaluations of the man have come, not in a *New Yorker* profile or the columns of the *Guild Reporter*, but from a close friend and lieutenant of many years, John Sorrells, in the official *Handbook of Scripps-Howard*:

. . . He is a complex personality, full of contradictions. He is considerate by nature, but will call important conferences for the end of the day when his associates are fagged; he forms quick and positive opinions, but will often put off making a decision. Roy is realistic, yet has an infinite capacity for rationalization; he is persuasive in argument, but is a soft touch for a salesman. He is skeptical and wary, but can be taken in by sheer charm; he forms instant likes and prejudices, but has little capacity for nursing a grudge.

The keynote in Roy's temperament is action. In the vernacular of sports, his instinct is to get rid of the ball. Yet in Roy, action is harnessed to imagination: he can plan the course of his action and vision the end result . . . he likes to manage, and his administrative interests cover a wide range. He once took an associate to task for permitting his wife to endure the birth of a ten-pound baby; Roy thought his associate should have managed things to have a child of lesser weight.

Roy will arrange your itinerary, secure you rooms, diagnose your ailment, show you how to bone a fish or pronounce the name of French cuisine, just as readily and as competently as he will analyze the fit of your jacket, edit your story or tell you what's wrong with your front page. . . .

Roy is subject to a good deal of criticism by his close associates in the General Management. (This criticism is open and aboveboard with no holds barred—a characteristic of Scripps-Howard management and operation.) Some of them think he pays too close attention to detail, that he is overly impulsive. Roy usually pleads guilty to both indictments and by so doing saves a lot of argument. . . .

Roy has an assertive and waspish manner that is frequently a trial to his associates, especially when he feels that his judgment is based upon personal experience or upon the record. . . .

Roy is positive in his opinions, but generally accepts the majority view of his associates even when it conflicts with his own best judgment. But he always takes full responsibility for the result of any course of action, irrespective of whether he defers or prevails in council. He has no fondness for "I told you so." . . .

Howard has no fondness for personal publicity either. His infrequent public appearances have come in discharge of the obligations of his position or to achieve some serious purpose, usually involving the editorial ideals of journalism. But he does like to be where things are going on: that's where the news is. He likes to be known as a man

who is in the center of the main stream. He makes no show of his means and has built no San Simeon, not even a Miramar. He once owned a yacht but gave it up. It was a purposeless waste of time and energy, and it kept him out of touch. Isolation is no boon to Howard; he has absolutely none of the recluse instincts Scripps had. His lifetime has been spent bucking the heaviest, most agitated currents he could find—and a deep reportorial instinct has led him straight to storm centers. He once was offered an ambassadorship, he is admitted to the privy councils of political kingmakers and, acting on a legitimate news break any reporter would have seized, he was the man responsible for the famous premature armistice of World War I on November 7, 1918.⁸ Today Howard lives quietly and unostentatiously in Manhattan with his wife, the former Margaret Rohe, herself a newspaper and magazine writer before her marriage. He has passed on much of his control of the Scripps-Howard enterprises to younger men. Still the largest minority stockholder, he remains chairman of the executive committee and editor of the chain's New York link, the *World-Telegram and Sun*. He enjoys the prize fights occasionally but has no box at the opera.

Howard's sketch biographers⁹ have passed over several items of personality which tend to humanize a figure usually presented as formidable and caught, a little breathless, between planes. One of these is the candor which Howard not only exercises liberally as his own birthright of free speech, a matter well documented by his detractors, but also insists upon from his professional intimates, a fact little known outside the top circles of the organization. He is not addressed in hushed tones of awe, and he has little respect for the man who does not speak his mind. A wholly inaccurate portrait of Howard sometimes has been offered, picturing a canny financier who tempers editorial policy to the ring of the cash register. Actually he is an extremely jealous guardian of the Scripps policy of editorial supremacy. Editors are in command. By official definition advertising is a by-product in the marketing of Scripps-Howard's wares; the major product is news and the newspaper itself.

The dress—polychromatic checked and striped shirts, flashy ties, and a dapper cut to suits and waistcoats—originally was a calculated experiment and since probably has become habit, certainly a trade mark. Roy once explained to a friend that he adopted the dress because he realized that his stature, slightly under average, would not attract much attention. "By God, I want people to know I'm around—you don't get in on things

⁸Howard has told the inside story of the mix-up in Webb Miller's *I Found No Peace* (New York, 1936), pp. 90-108.

⁹There is no full-length biography. Profiles are provided by Sorrells, pp. 72-80, Cochran, pp. 222-26, Morris, pp. 23-31, all previously cited; and by Forrest Davis in John E. Drewry, ed., *Post Biographies of Famous Journalists* (University of Georgia, 1942), pp. 167-86.

otherwise." Both he and his friend Ray Long, also a small man, bloomed out by design and almost simultaneously. Early pictures of them together show a dashing pair, leaning on sticks, wearing spats, boutonnieres, and their glasses on wide black ribbons. Later Howard was credited with being the man who inaugurated the vogue of the midnight-blue dinner jacket.

Howard is perfectly amiable about the snide comments his dress sometimes evokes. When he came to Denver in 1926 he was not well known by sight to the *News-Times* staff. George McIntyre, an *Evening News* reporter, took one critical look at the sartorial splendor of the stranger around the office and asked: "Who's the crapshooter?" Howard was near enough to overhear. A few days later he and McIntyre passed each other on the narrow stairway.

"Got time for a little craps?" Howard inquired.

Crapshooting—or something equivalent to it in terms of the newspaper business—must have been very much on Howard's mind when he moved into Denver in November of 1926. He knew the venture was going to cost him money. What he didn't realize at the time was how much and for how awfully long. Years later, when the red ink still was flowing, he confessed that "every time I hear the word Denver it gives me dyspepsia."

CHAPTER TWENTY

“Battle of the Century”

THE impress of two of the strongest personalities in American journalism now was brought to bear on the shaping character of the *Rocky Mountain News*. To the pioneering courage of Byers were added the underdog social philosophy and waste-not, want-not economics of Scripps. To the heritage of Loveland's new-era vision and Patterson's tenacious integrity came the propulsive force of the alert and purposeful Howard, reporter incarnate.

A pedigree of titans, surely. Yet somehow, somewhere along the way, the alignment of the genes went temporarily awry.

Possibly the mile-high altitude of Denver turned otherwise level heads light. Perhaps the Colorado air, universally asserted to be winelike in nature, was responsible. Or it could have been that vast magnetic storms on the surface of the sun disrupted from its implacable course the “isothermal zodiac and axis of intensity” which good old Governor Gilpin identified. According to the calculations of its discoverer, this all-powerful, destiny-molding axis passes exactly through the city of Denver, and it may be assumed, therefore, that any cosmic short circuit would yield profound derangements. Who can say the causes? Except that it was not midsummer and the moon was not full.

Whatever the reasons—and some of them, obviously, were not caprices—the *News* dived headlong and hooting into the wackiest slugging match since Punch and Judy. Denver was treated to two years of such fantastic newspaper competition as taxes the credulity of anyone who was not an eyewitness. Those who survived it called the contest the “Battle of the Century,” and although a relative peace now has reigned for some thirty years the commotion on the Western frontier evoked an amazed interest so general that it is still talked about with chuckles and headshakes wherever newsmen gather in press clubs or corner bars to relive lustier days.

The din was earsplitting. Signal bombs rocked the downtown district. Brass bands paraded. An airplane swooped over the city at perilously low altitudes so that none should miss the benefits of periodic shrieks from an outsized siren mounted beneath the wing and capable of drowning the noise of the engine.

There was skulduggery in the night. Newspapers were systematically

filched from the doorsteps of subscribers by agents, presumably dark-cloaked, who followed delivery boys on their nocturnal rounds. Advance information on what the other paper would attempt next was valued highly, and networks of espionage were woven. The *News* had a pipe line into the *Post* composing room along which flowed advance tips on forthcoming feature stories and promotions. The game of I Spy reached its climax when the hotel room used for strategic planning by *News* generals was bugged with a concealed microphone.

Generosity and premiums rained on the populace as manna from the heavens. If one became impatient with the calculated procrastinations of a serialized novel in the pages of the *Post*, the whole book could be obtained free with a subscription to the *News*. Once a week the "Peach" edition of the *News* was given away to everyone on the streets. For a time Denver automobilists could run their machines on largess. Free gasoline went with every want ad.

There were beauty queens, limerick contests, touring clubs, and flag-pole sitters. The *News* put one of the latter atop a post in front of the new business and advertising office opened in the Johnson Building at Seventeenth Street and Glenarm Place, around the corner from the Welton Street plant, although today it is not clear what kind of business the paper hoped to attract with such aerial shenanigans. Both papers staged elaborate World Series parties in the streets in front of their offices, loudspeakers blaring and huge electric boards visualizing the plays. Anything to keep the town stirred up. The goal, one of the survivors of the era has said, was to win a "gee whiz reaction" to each new edition.

Quite aside from the mad scramble of promotions and contests, the pace was a dizzying one for the news departments too. Cheap crime stories which today would not be published in either paper then were wrung dry through several days of new leads, new angles, spread dragnets, and underworld tips before finally dwindling away: "Police Baffled by Peanut Stand Holdup." Every hapless streetwalker became a "key figure" in "white slave ring" and mystery surrounded any slum suicide. On penalty of having their hearts cut out by meat-eating city editors, beat men were required to produce something on every story that would top what the opposition had printed. The hopped-up reporters played grimly at breakneck speed their sport of scoops, that family-circle recreation which newsmen pursue so earnestly to the total indifference or amused tolerance of everyone else. Ten minutes or less represented the margin between news and ancient history, although it may be questioned whether Denver's awed newspaper readers were aware that time had been telescoped or properly grateful for the enterprise which made it so. It was Chicago-style journalism straight out of *The Front Page*, but by the time Ben Hecht and Charles MacArthur got around to writing the play in 1928 Denver, if not Chicago, had quieted down somewhat.

In retrospect two features of the "battle of the century" stand out as

prominently as a typographical error in an eight-column headline. First, it was an exceedingly costly contest for the two men who had to pay the bills. Secondly, it was entirely out of character for one of the adversaries.

The *Rocky Mountain News* had a tradition of proper newspapering behind it. Perhaps it had even been ponderous and deadly on occasion. Moreover the Scripps-Howard organization had built its expanding success on hardhitting, levelheaded reporting conservatively presented with a minimum of screaming heads and no giveaway gimmicks. That sort of journalism was being practiced in every other city where there were Scripps papers. Yet in Denver, of a sudden, all bets were off. Restraint was cast to the mountain breezes. Stunts on Champa Street were matched by bigger and better antics on Welton Street—Gresham’s law of journalism in operation again—and the high jinks luxuriated. Top-ranking Scripps-Howard officials wise in experience and tested in capabilities converged on Denver from New York and Ohio, alighted from their trains in full possession of their wits, and then immediately began bolting down safety valves and stoking on the coal. Nothing was too expensive, or too fantastic, to be tried once.

The casual regard for money in large quantities was aberrant for *both* opponents. Down in the Red Room, Bonfils suffered acute spasms of grief when he consulted his balance sheets, and the Scripps-Howard organization was noted far and wide for close husbandry. By that true and tested route old E.W.’s original ten thousand dollars had been built into a vast newspaper empire, and the founder’s lessons in thrift were not lost on his successor. Most of the papers in the chain were carefully managed, modestly profitable operations, and now they were called upon to support in profligacy a pair of scarlet sisters out in Denver. Other Scripps editors must have felt that mountain madness indeed had seized the organization.

Howard and Bonfils had had a chance, a few years earlier, to test each other’s metal. In one respect the two men were alike: both were tough dealers, steady of nerve, and unflinching when the chips were down. Bonfils had tried to run a bluff and had been caught holding a bobtailed flush.

The *Post*, which boasted on page one above the masthead that it utilized every news service known to mortal man, was a subscriber to Roy Howard’s growing United Press. Suddenly, in 1920, Bonfils ignored his contract, dropped the UP, and refused to pay his tithe. Monthly bills for the unused news went into the wastebasket. UP sued for violation of contract, and the court found for Bonfils. Two appeals were made to the Colorado Supreme Court, but each time the high court remanded the case back on technicalities. Howard decided to make a trip to Denver to see if personal bargaining could succeed where lawyers failed. He called on Bonfils in his office at 10 A.M. on July 4, 1920. A rehearing of the breach-of-contract suit was scheduled for the following Monday.

Howard remembers that he was admitted to the Red Room promptly but then was kept waiting for several minutes. Bon was reading a well-thumbed Bible. He ignored his caller with some deliberation while he finished reading the verse then engaging his meditations. Finally he looked up soulfully and brightened into a cordial greeting.

There was small talk, and Bon agreeably suggested that the two of them take a week off and go fishing in the hills. Be my guest. Howard said no, thanks, that his time was pre-empted, and now if they could just get down to brass tacks on the matter of the UP's due bills. The two publishers sparred for nearly an hour and made no progress. At length Roy ran out of patience.

"Okay, okay," he told Bonfils. "We'll just let the lawyers have another bout at it."

Thereupon Bon drew a folded piece of paper from his desk drawer and apologized:

"Awfully sorry to have to do this, but here's a summons for your appearance in court next Monday. I have been deputized to serve it on you."

"Great," Howard countered and reached for the paper. "I'd *really* like to see if the Colorado trout are biting, and this summons will justify my staying over. We'll go fishing over the weekend."

Bon rested his steel-blue eyes on his visitor, put the "summons" away, and reached for his checkbook.

"Bon always was Chesterfieldian, and never more so than that day," Howard says. "We came to an agreement in fifteen minutes."

The United Press also was involved in one of Howard's first maneuvers after he threw the challenge direct in his speech to the Denver Chamber of Commerce. He was proud of his news service, wanted to make it dominant and to prove that top-notch newspapers could be published using UP news exclusively. The NEWSpapers dropped their membership in the Associated Press with a flourish, and Howard reduced the value of the AP franchise on the books from two hundred thousand dollars to zero. Full-page ads appeared pointing to the triumphs scored by the nimble UP and denouncing the attempted "news monopoly" of the rival service. The UP could break the monopoly wide open and would prove it in the columns of the NEWSpapers.

Shaffer had made Tamm a present of a Sunday AP franchise. Now Bonfils, running his circus alone after Tam's death in 1924, had the gift of a morning franchise too. He used it promptly to carry through on the gulling Tamm had given the trusting John Shaffer. The *Morning Post* appeared January 3, 1927, with Bill Shanklin, late of the *News* staff, as managing editor. The battle was joined—around the clock.

The *Morning Post* said of itself: ". . . gladiator invincible, fearless, determined, with a giant's strength, a philosopher's mentality. . . . It will be the champion of every good, and pure, and noble, and holy, and

righteous cause, and the faithful and unceasing defender of righteousness, justice, decency, law and order; it will be the opponent of every wrong and evil thing, of every form of crime, oppression, greed, selfishness and lawlessness. . . ."

The brash new magazine, *Time*, used a different set of descriptives in its issue of January 17: "Last week a loud noise was heard in the Rocky Mountains. . . . It was the new newspaper in Denver, the *Morning Post*. It had been started to drown out the *Rocky Mountain News* at the Rocky Mountain breakfast table. . . ." *Time* went on to record that during the fall gubernatorial campaign the *News* had called the *Post* "a blackmailing, blackguarding, nauseous sheet which stinks to high heaven and is the shame of newspapermen the world over." The *News* also had linked Bonfils' name with various pleasantries of word and phrase. *Time* catalogued them: "shame, disgrace, bandit, brigand, lawless, prostitution of the press, rapacity, bunco game, scaly monstrosity, mountebank, hybrid ogre."

The *Morning Post* urged Denver to consider its civic pride grievously affronted by the offhand way the NEWSpapers had quit the AP. It trumpeted: "This greatest city between the Missouri River and the Pacific Ocean, east and west, and from the north pole to the City of Mexico north and south in this longitude, has been belittled, humiliated and wantonly and willfully disgraced by the selfishly bringing about of the abandonment of the morning Associated Press service in Denver." But the new matutinal philosopher now would remedy *that*.

"What a time!" Clyde Brion Davis comments thirty years later. "Oh, my God, what a time!"

The first issue of the *Morning Post* contained a whopping fifty-two pages. But the grapevine had brought word uptown of the *Post's* intentions; the *News* saw the bet and raised. Welton Street got out sixty-eight pages the same morning. Veritable Leviathans for time and place. The newsprint mills of Canada signed on emergency crews and went into extra shifts.

The *News* characterized the *Morning Post* as a clumsy, snorting "Baby Elephant," pointed to its own even greater size, and added the tag line "The Newspaper Situation in Denver Has Changed Considerably in the Last 24 Hours." The slogan appeared regularly thereafter whenever the NEWSpapers landed a blow and could point to drawn blood. Jim Lynch cartooned the new arrival on page one as a lumbering, frightened pachyderm emerging from a circus tent. A ringmaster labeled "Bon" was cracking a whip. Blindfolded Justice was standing on the elephant's back juggling four cubes tagged "B-U-N-K."

The *Post* snapped back that the *News* was the "Wildcat of Welton Street." This suited the *News* forces just fine. If the contest was to take a zoological turn, what better symbol than a wildcat? The *News* staff members rather fancied themselves as lithe, sure-footed, and ferocious.

A defunct bobcat was obtained, mounted in a fierce and snarling pose, and placed on display for all the town to see. The lifelike artistry was the work of Jonas Brothers, Denver taxidermists to whom half America's big-game hunters ship their Kodiak bears and Bengal tigers for mounting as trophies, and their wildcat was a major triumph of symbolic aggressiveness.

The day the Baby Elephant appeared the *News* scored a pell-mell exclusive of high derring-do. No newspaper east of California had been able to offer its sports fans action pictures of the Rose Bowl game until many days after interest had died away. Max B. Cook, now aviation editor for the Scripps-Howard newspapers, determined to turn the trick for the *News* and thus dim the debut of the *Morning Post*. Cook then was promotion editor of the *Cleveland Press*, and he was one of the experts dispatched to Denver to help the *NEWS*papers get started on their holy war. Cook made arrangements with the Los Angeles office of the Newspaper Enterprise Association. When Stanford and Alabama played to their memorable 7-7 tie on January 1 a fast car picked up negatives in Pasadena and sped them to Los Angeles for processing. The pictures were placed aboard the eastbound night flight of the fledgling United States air-mail service. All that night and most of the next day, Sunday, the little plane droned eastward. Denver had no direct air-mail service in those days; the high mountains immediately to the west were an impassable barrier. The slender coast-to-coast airway was routed by way of southern Wyoming over the same low saddle in the Continental Divide which served the Oregon pioneers, the California argonauts, and the Union Pacific Railroad. Nearest lighted airport to Denver was at Cheyenne, a hundred and ten miles north, and the plane was due there Sunday night. It landed an hour and a half early. A *News* squad was waiting to snatch the pictures.

At the wheel of a rakish Chrysler was Floyd Clymer, Denver motor enthusiast, former race driver, and today a noted historian of the horseless buggy era. With him were his adventurous wife, mechanic Louis Holt, Max Cook, and a bubbling young reporter, Jack Foster, Jr. Clymer raced for Denver at top speed in the dusk of a prairie winter day. Half the distance was rough with chuckholes, the other half sheeted with ice. Yet Clymer hit speeds up to eighty-five miles an hour and took the corners in wide skids. He set a new Cheyenne-Denver record: 109 minutes for 110 miles. The Rose Bowl photos made even the bulldog edition. The Baby Elephant had to make its bow with sports pages innocent of Rose Bowl pictures. Bitter blow!

Roy Howard remained in personal command in Denver for many weeks. Top officials, experts, and trouble shooters were brought in, and new blood from other Scripps papers to build up the staffs. An entire floor of the Cosmopolitan Hotel, one of Denver's finest, was taken over

to house the high brass and provide conference rooms for their tactical sessions.

Harold Hall, later for many years business manager of the New York *Times* and at this time president of the Scripps-Howard Newspaper Supply Company, was placed in charge of the purse strings. He untied them and stretched the mouth of the bag wide. Each day for the next two years he would have to dig a little deeper. Along with Howard, Hall, and Cook, the top echelon included George B. Parker, Scripps-Howard editorial director from New York; Bill Chandler, later president of the Scripps-Howard Supply Company; and Jack Foster, Sr., managing editor of the *Cleveland Press* and the organization's top trouble shooter. A few weeks after the battle started Jack Foster, Jr., "Young Jack," surprised his father, "Old Jack," by turning up in Denver. A keen shavelling, eager for adventurous scoops, Young Jack had wangled a transfer from the *Cleveland Press*. A newspaper war in Denver promised action and glory and was not to be missed.

Chosen to edit the *NEWSpapers* was Edward T. Leech, a former Denver boy whose father had been superintendent of the United States Mint. As a youth Ed Leech carried papers for the *Times*, and he had been a cub on the old *Republican*. He moved over to the reportorial staff of the *Express* in 1912 at the age of twenty and was appointed its editor in 1916. After a season or two with the Scripps papers in Memphis he was sent to Birmingham, where he founded the *Post* for the organization in 1921. Later he became editor of the *Pittsburgh Press*. Mild-mannered, tenacious, and a true working editor, Leech's penchant for hard-hitting political campaigns and exposés got him thrown in jail both in Memphis, where he locked horns with the Crump machine, and in Birmingham. Denver police treated him somewhat more gently, though Bonfils roughed him up a bit—with the help of the police department. The *Morning Post* baldly demanded that the police and firemen get out and solicit subscriptions under threat of withdrawing its support of a pay raise then pending. The boys in blue dutifully punched doorbells for several weeks.

A. J. Gillis, who had been business manager of the *Express*, was appointed to the same position for the two *NEWSpapers*. Joseph L. Cauthorn, now president of the *San Francisco News*, was brought in to help out, and Harold Hall was in town for nearly six months overseeing the entire business and financial end of the hostilities. Fred Anderson, circulation manager of the *San Francisco News*, assisted in the frenetic drive for subscribers and street sales. Wilfrid C. Bussing, later business manager of the *Evansville Press*, was made advertising manager. Bussing also was an *Express* alumnus. He was later succeeded as *News* ad manager by M. F. Riblett.

As one who was on the scene and watched the build-up of forces, slot man Clyde Davis remembers it this way:

First came the staff of the little *Denver Express*, headed by Managing Editor Walden Sweet, who assumed he was to take over. But poor Walden failed to reckon with those master politicians Eddie Day and Lee Casey. Before he could find a place to hang his hat Walden was out on the street on general assignments. [Later Sweet went to the *Post*.]

Roy Howard himself was on hand at first and Deac Parker and Jack Foster. . . . Then there were the "Kokomo Boys." That's what we called them, although I doubt that any were actually from Kokomo. They were from places like Akron, Columbus and maybe French Lick and they had come to show us how to put out a newspaper.

Practically the first thing Scripps-Howard did on Welton Street was to throw the Associated Press franchise out the window. F. G. Bonfils caught it on the first bounce. . . .

It wasn't so bad for the *Evening News*. They had the United Press, even then a capable news-gathering agency. But the sole wire service left for the *Rocky Mountain News* was the United News, then the United Press night feature service with one puny Morse wire leading into Denver—eight hours of Morse wire for feature stories by Sam Love and others, market gossip, sports, bulletins, corrections, late news, everything.

It had been announced fairly definitely that our purpose now was to run the *Denver Post* out of town, and we began to put out a big, wide-open paper. When I say wide-open, I mean wide-open. We were a full-size, eight-column sheet then, and we started putting out 30 and 40 and even 50-page editions with nearly 200 columns of yawning news space.

The nightly wire report was completely ridiculous in those circumstances, filling no more than six or eight columns, and the big blond Kokomo Boy who was in charge until we got an official editor apparently hadn't the faintest idea of our problem or of what was going on. Happily, I have forgotten this Kokomo Boy's name. He'd come in late at night, ask to see carbons of the United News report, go through the tiny little stack and say blandly to me, "Nice report tonight, wasn't it?"

How were we filling that gigantic paper? Well, the local staffs, augmented by the boys and girls from the old *Express*, really pounded out copy, and for once in their lives their stories were allowed to run full length. Then, I was coming to work at noon or before, stopping at a newsstand to buy the bulldog editions of the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, *Detroit Free Press*, *San Francisco Chronicle* and other papers that had large staffs of correspondents, and I went through these sheets with scissors, avoiding copyrighted pieces and AP feature stories, but clipping them up and sending them to the composing room head to come. And by the time the night-side copyreaders began to drift in, there'd be proofs about the startling monster seen in the Irish Hills of Michigan and the interesting fact that the three-toed owl of New Zealand has three toes on each foot.

News of the *Denver* newspaper war attracted alleged newspaper

people from everywhere, and we hired anyone who said he was a copy-reader. Most of them weren't, but some of them learned.

Unlike most of the Kokomo Boys, who just stood around mostly thinking up stupid questions to ask, Jack Foster *père* spotted the copy desk as the hottest corner of the shop and sat on the rim night after night, working a full shift. He, of course, was a real newspaperman, although he did post one notice on the bulletin board declaring that no reporter should write a sentence long enough to require a comma.

In the old days we had used the New York *Times* style book, and no doubt we were a bit stodgy in some respects. So, when I'd throw a head back to Mr. Foster and say, "Sorry, we have a rule that you can't end the first line with a preposition," he'd squint at me over his stogy and say, "That rule has just been repealed."

Young Jack Foster then was a sensitive adolescent who wrote a daily verse called "Drifting in Denver" and four or five columns of local copy. He wanted to take over the Sunday book page which I had been handling for several years, and I gladly let him have it. I did not tell him, however, that under the Shaffer management I was being paid five dollars a week extra for that chore. I continued to draw the weekly fin, and Jack had the fun.

Working conditions improved after a few weeks when Ed Leech was brought up from Birmingham and the Kokomo Boys went back to Kokomo. Leech was a real newspaperman even though he never had worked on a paper large enough to have a copy desk. At first he had a few curious ideas about the function of that institution. It took some argument over several weeks to convince him that copyreaders didn't need typewriters for head-writing.

Clyde Davis' attitude toward the "Kokomo Boys" reflects a haughty tradition of Denver journalism which dates back at least to Eugene Field's man who worked with Dana on the *Sun*. Denver newspapermen will fight bitterly among themselves and slit each other's throats gaily for a news beat, but they close ranks against imports, particularly outsiders who conceive their mission in Indian country to be educational. Having produced a rather impressive roster of big-timers, the Denver fourth estate doesn't take kindly to carpetbaggers. The fierce competitive situation which has existed for seventy-five years or more has made the city a prime training ground for young reporters and desk men, perhaps second only to Chicago, and while many Denver men have "gone east" to positions of prominence, very few adventurous souls moving in the opposite direction have made much of a splash in the Denver puddle. By and large Denver trains her own. Possessors of high-powered reputations are likely to find the mountain air chilly and the apprenticeship rough.

Forbes Parkhill tells in *The Wildest of the West* of the sad fate of a New Yorker, somewhat given to airs, who sought to make the grade as a Denver police reporter. The visiting expert dropped disparaging

remarks about hick methods and proposed remedial measures. Irritation mounted. The semibasement pressroom at old City Hall had branch telephones connected directly to each paper but also a glassed-in public phone booth occasionally used for confidential conversations with bootleggers and girl friends. The New Yorker always used the booth, implying that every story he phoned in was a "beat." The coziness revolted his colleagues, and they ganged up on him.

"What happens when you big-shot New Yorkers get scooped?" one of them inquired innocently.

"Well," the visitor explained loftily, "competition in New York is mighty tough. You come back from an assignment with an exclusive or you don't come back."

"That so?" a local veteran replied. "Out here it's different. You've got to settle with the boys you've scooped. We're right touchy about such things. What kind of a gun do you pack?"

"Why, I've never found it necessary to carry firearms."

The Denver reporters drew pistols (borrowed from friendly cops) and put them beside their typewriters. "What was the name of that guy from the East who put one over on us last January?"

"Slips my mind," was the reply, "but you can find it on his headstone out at Riverside Cemetery."

The New Yorker paled a little but force of habit took him to the phone booth to give his next story to a rewrite man. His competitors rushed the booth and overturned it with him inside. As he crawled out of the broken glass the locals pulled their pistols and began shooting into the ceiling. (A bulwark of solid nineteenth-century masonry protected the mayor in his office directly overhead.) Parkhill, who was one of the locals, says the visiting journalist streaked for Union Station without stopping to collect his pay.

At the *News* the boys from Kokomo were followed a few years later by a delegation which promptly became known as the "Ohio Gang." None of the gang had much staying power. One of the more recent victims of the provincial hauteur was a blond young man named John Keats whose books, *The Crack in the Picture Window*, *Schools without Scholars*, and *The Insolent Chariots*, have given good accounts of themselves on best-seller lists. Keats came to the *News* from Washington shortly after World War II with an advance billing which did nothing to soften his reception. Worst suspicions were confirmed within a few weeks when the competent but undiplomatic Keats began proposing certain changes in methodology and dropping suggestions for improvement of policy. They may have been good suggestions, too, but unfortunately the air congealed around them. The isolation Keats suffered was brutal. He fell back on Washington with Rocky Mountain hoarfrost an inch deep on his shoulder blades. The tradition which frosted him is not defended; it is merely recorded.

Local journalistic heroes are less likely to be men who burned up the *Herald Trib* or the *Philly Record* than home-grown boys who have borne the heat of the day. Men like the *News'* associate editor, Robert L. Chase, who proved an indestructible city editor through several rounds of Kokomo visitations and Ohio Gangs. Lanky and dour, Chase's natural forte is the crepe-hung jeremiad combined with the question "Why?" and the demand "Prove it." He is much mellowed of late, but cubs who broke in under him can summon up a cold sweat on the hottest day by remembering the devastating, entirely unprofane monosyllables with which he greeted stupidity and blunders. Chase is, spare the phrase, a newspaperman's newspaperman, and he came by the palm honestly by way of a thorough knowledge of his city, an ability to pound into his subordinates what he had learned, and a faculty for keeping his head when everyone else is pacing the ceiling. "A solid character," Clyde Davis says of him.

Chase is one of two former members of the *Express* staff who have stood by the *News* through thin and thick to the present day. The other is Georgia Hanfelder, once the *Express'* bookkeeper and now cashier for the *News*. A third *Express* alumnus is Denver County Judge David Brofman, whose court sometimes appears in lists of legal superlatives as the largest single-judge county court in the country. Brofman was a police reporter for the *Express* until a circulation contest was held. He got subscriptions from so many cops that it was decided literature's loss should be commerce's gain and he was put in the circulation department. When the merger came Brofman went to the *Post* briefly as a police reporter but then returned to the *News* circulation department, studying law at night, until he was admitted to the bar in 1929. Arch Northway, who retired in 1958 as a circulation bookkeeper, also came from the *Express* to the *News* in the merger.

As 1926 ended, staffs for the NEWSpapers took shape in readiness for the heavy work ahead. The *Morning Post* now was out of the rumor stage, and a high degree of just-before-the-battle exhilaration tingled on Welton Street. Ed Leech arrived from Birmingham to take over the editorship. George Sanford Holmes became managing editor of the *Rocky Mountain News*, and Eddie Day took the same spot for the *Evening News*. Lee Casey was editorial writer for the evening paper. R. E. ("Josh") Wilson, who had been editor of the *Express* in its last days, became associate editor and editorial writer. James H. MacLennan continued to turn out editorials and a full page of esoteric dicta for the Sunday paper. Presiding over the night-side copy desk was Clyde Davis. Copyreaders of the time included George Burns, Lucius E. ("Hump") Humphrey, Frank Plumb, and Grey J. Tipton.

Charles E. Lounsbury, onetime *News* police reporter, was brought back from the *Post* and a side job as publicity manager for Universal Films to assist Max Cook as promotion editor. Within two years Lounsbury

was managing editor and another three saw him in the editor's chair. Between them Cook and Lounsbury conjured up most of the stunts, hairbreadth adventures, and shrill war cries of the "gee whiz" years. If, at a distance, some of their antics now appear to have been touched with madness, they seemed the work of sheer genius at the time.

John P. Lewis was city editor for the morning paper. His counterpart on the afternoon side was Frank Farley. Mrs. Joseph Emerson Smith and Dorothy Knox shared the society editorships. Richard M. Scott handled the A.M. financial page, and Thomas H. Walker the state desk. Harry G. Baker laid out the paper as make-up editor. Among others riding desk jobs were Joe McMeel and the quiet, much-respected "Judge" Beardshear. The reportorial staff at various points in the hectic biennium included Bob Chase, Kaspar Monahan, Wallis M. Reef, Jack Carberry, Harvey Sethman, Gene Lindberg, Deane Dickason, Max Greedy, John Polly, Allen ("Big Fat Duck") Bartlett, Milus Gay, Loudon Kelly, Maurice ("Spider") Leckenby, Scott Hershey, George McIntyre, Gordon Porter, Gene Cervi, Alberta Pike, who won from grudging males the admission that she was one of the town's top newspapermen, and the future editor, "Young Jack" Foster.

Foster would have cast a long shadow ahead of himself—except that he was a skinny kid and moved too fast to cast a shadow of any kind. Indefatigable, then as now, one full shift was not enough to drain off his superabundant energies. He served on the staffs of *both* papers, turning up morning, noon, and midnight with reams of copy. He never was exactly sure which paper he was working for. Jack had grown up underfoot in the *Cleveland Press* city room, and he had been doing rewrite there when the prospects of a Donnybrook in Denver brought him west. He covered general assignments for the *NEWS*papers, sat in on the rewrite desk, and wrote not one but two daily columns, both involving original poetry. His "The Water Hole" column appeared in the *Rocky Mountain News*, and "Drifting in Denver," an illustrated poem signed "J.F.," was a feature of the *Evening News*. He also handled the Sunday book page with Bill Beardshear as his most faithful reviewer. In his spare time Foster climbed mountains and cultivated friendships in Denver's Chinese colony. H. Allen Smith, then a cub on the *Post*, recalls that Foster was his opposition two years hand running in coverage of Cheyenne's famous Frontier Days rodeo. "We had a lot of fun together in Cheyenne, and now and then I even got out to the fairgrounds. Jack never missed a performance."

Smith left Denver in 1929 to win undying fame as "the screwball's Boswell" and the man who called J. P. Morgan "Toots" to his face, but he has bequeathed journalism some memoirs of his Denver days in *Low Man on a Totem Pole*. Bonfils, he remembers, "took a personal interest in me for a time and let me write many of the stories which appeared in his paper about Frederick G. Bonfils."

I came on duty at the paper at eight o'clock in the morning. Bonfils arrived ten minutes later. There ensued each day a little drama that I shall never forget. The men's toilet was across the big room from Bonfils' private office. It contained six booths, three on either side of the room. Bonfils decided one day to have the doors taken off these booths—then a man could sit down and talk with the man or men across the way.

Precisely at eight-thirty each morning it was his custom to emerge briskly from his private office and cross the floor to the men's room. It was always fun to watch the minor executives as soon as the clock reached eight twenty-five. One by one they would leave their desks and head for the can. Then at eight-thirty Bonfils would cross the room. There was always a scramble for five of the booths, but one of the center positions was left open for the boss.

He would enter and cry out, "Good morning!"

"Good morning, boss!"—from five booths. Then he would take his place, and production of the day's newspaper would be officially under way.

Smith knew "Josh" Wilson as a valiant who "drank straight alcohol out of a gallon glass jug and compelled me to read Plutarch. . . . I always considered it a fine compliment that he referred to me as 'the youngest old reprobate on earth.'" Smith records that when Wilson died later in Wichita he "evoked from Westbrook Pegler a eulogy that had not a single insult in it."

Most of the other giants of the day have also departed the scenes of their ponderous frolics and heroic smitings. Bob Chase remains, and Max Greedy, now news editor. The kindly, soft-spoken (but arousable) Greedy came to the *News* in January 1927, after seasoning on the *Post*, *Pueblo Chieftain*, *Little Rock Gazette*, and *Los Angeles Times*, and he has been there since except for a brief hiatus during which he was an official of the *Register* system of national Catholic newspapers published from Denver. He ran the gantlet from reporter and copyreader through city editor, slot man, and telegraph editor to his present position.

The evergreen Harry Rhoads, of course, is still on hand. During 1926-28 he and J. Winton Lemen formed the photographic staff for both papers. They worked shifts which circled the clock, were on call twenty-four hours a day seven days a week, but had the privilege of taking alternate Sundays off.

Kaspar Monahan left Denver to become drama editor of the *Pittsburgh Press*. For a quarter century or more Harvey Sethman has been lay executive of the Colorado Medical Society. John Polly has held executive positions on papers in Knoxville, Salt Lake City, and Long Beach, California. Loudon Kelly is with the Denver bureau of the AP. Like John Lewis, "Spider" Leckenby has won nirvana as editor of his own weekly newspaper, the *Steamboat Springs, Colorado, Pilot*, founded by his pioneering father. Gene Cervi edits a sprightly and popular business

weekly in Denver, the *Rocky Mountain Journal*, which bases its success among a highly conservative following on the unlikely formula of shirt-tearing, Vesuvius-like eruptions of moralistic breast beating and the deliberate baiting of all Republicans and nearly all financiers. Cervi regards himself as "the conscience of the Denver press," calls the proprietors of the *Post* megalomaniacs and the *News* the "19th button on Roy Howard's green pistachio shirt."

Allen Bartlett, later editor of the Scripps-Howard *Houston Press*, gave himself the nickname "Big Fat Duck." Bart was a college wrestler and weighted in at something close to two hundred and twenty pounds. During the era of high journalistic enterprise he got himself stuck in a ventilator shaft while eavesdropping on a closed union meeting. "There I was, like a big fat duck."

Gene Lindberg now writes poetry and science, a combination he finds logical, for the *Post*, but one of his greatest literary triumphs failed to see print. Lindberg was covering the police beat for the *Evening News*. An itinerant passion play came to town and two of the leading actors, portraying Jesus and Judas, got drunk after the first performance. They wobbled down Sixteenth Street and became embroiled in an unbiblical argument in front of Joslin's dry-goods store. It ended when one punched the other through the plate-glass window and the paddy wagon arrived. Lindberg wrote the story and submitted his own headline:

JESUS SETTLES 2000-YEAR-OLD GRUDGE; KNOCKS JUDAS THROUGH PLATE GLASS WINDOW

Gene's story was published, but the headline was deleted in deference to public sensibilities. Denver boasts a phenomenal per capita ratio of churches.

Wally Reef now is information director for the Colorado Highway Department, and Jack Carberry has gone over to the *Post*, where he is executive sports editor and indulges in snide remarks about "the morning fishwrapper." In 1926 they formed an unbeatable crime reporting team. They cleaned up a notorious Colorado Springs murder case, and Reef won a personal commendation from Roy Howard as "the greatest detective in America." H. Allen Smith remembers that "Wally Reef was always getting me in trouble at West Side Court."

I took things easy over there. About once a week he'd saunter in and loaf around for a while, acting as if he'd just happened by, and then the next morning the *News* would burst forth with a big exclusive from the DA or some judge, and Johnny Day [*Post* city editor and brother of Eddie Day of the *News*] would eat my butt out, saying, "For Christ's sake can't you learn to keep your eye on that goddam Wally Reef?" I never learned to do it.

The *News* sports staff included Vernon ("Curly") Grieve as morning editor, Lowell L. Leake in afternoon command, Abe Pollock, Volney Wash, Ham Beresford, N. C. ("Tub") Morris, and a redheaded kid who hung out with a racy crowd at Totman's Drugstore. Chet Nelson was breaking in covering high school athletics. He joined the full-time staff in 1932, became sports editor in June 1934, and is rated as a civic benefactor for keeping bookmakers off relief.

Drama editor was the patrician and beauteous Helen Marie Black, whose brother, now District Judge William A. Black, had worked in the *News* business office. Today Helen is manager of the Denver Symphony. In 1926, Clyde Davis asserts, she was "a bright girl who couldn't spell but who had a genius for innocent double entendres."

At one point eight artists labored at *News* easels to maintain aesthetics on a high plane. They were headed by the cartoonist Jim Lynch and Charlie Wunder. Reporter Chet Letts could fill in if needed; his experience as an artist stretched back to the day of scratchboard plates. It was a time of much vignetting and prettying up of newspaper photos with doodads and curlicues; the unadorned "art" of the present-day newspaper would have been beneath contempt as lacking flair and style. *News* artists of the mad twenties were kept busy adding frosting and Spencerian scrollwork to the mug shots of dignitaries and parachutists. It was also a time of diagrammatic reporting: a Maltese cross to mark where the body had lain, a bold dotted line to show how the bank robbers fled to the high-powered getaway car purring at the curb.

Another *News* staff member of the day requires special billing. Denver has produced a long run of superior woman journalists: Ellis Meredith, Patience Stapleton, Polly Pry, Alice Rohe, Hettie Cattell, Frances Wayne, Alberta Pike—a goodly sorority which asked no quarter of male competitors, gave none, and scorned the traditionally feminine fields of social news, fashions, and entertainments. But none of the lady newspapermen carved her initials so deeply into the trunk of Denver journalism as an Irish girl who scored beats with aplomb, undertook adventures with dash, and succeeded often in the dangerous game of playing practical jokes on Eddie Day, a curmudgeon type and frequently humorless. H. Allen Smith, Clyde Davis, and John Lewis all have reminiscences of Mary Coyle.

Lewis remembers a day when an Indian chief, visiting the office for an interview about the old West, became distracted and sought to strike a bargain in blankets for the "blue dress squaw" working at a typewriter across the room. "It would have made a hell of a buy no matter how many blankets," Lewis comments. "The squaw was Mary Coyle." She is now Mary Coyle Chase, wife of the *News* associated editor and Pulitzer-prize playwright for her *Harvey*. The persistent legend is that Bob and Mary were married on their lunch hour, while waiting for a jury to come in or some such brief and unromantic interlude. In due course Mary

retired from newspapering. *Harvey* and her other plays were written amid the tumults of rearing three robust boys and the cross-bearing which goes with being the wife of a morning newspaperman, a pitiful situation of cold dinners, loneliness, social hibernation, and inattention, as the wife of any morning newspaperman will certify.

"All of us, including Mary, got a big kick out of the Indian incident," John Lewis continues, "but I got none out of the week I was damned fool enough to assign Mary to take a shot of scopolamine, then being used experimentally as a truth serum, before a convention of peace officers. It was all good fun when Chief Reed interrogated her, under the influence, about the theft of a picture taken in the routine course of duty in the kind of journalism that used to prevail in Denver. But it wasn't fun that Mary developed an infection from the shot. She didn't recover for days, and my grayer hairs never did turn dark again."

H. Allen Smith writes:

During my period in Denver the emphasis was more on getting pictures than on getting prose. All of us were accomplished picture-stealers because the rule in most cases was, first get the picture, then worry about the story. I seem to remember being in a semi-darkened room in the home of a woman who had committed suicide, and Mary Coyle was there for the *News*. She was sitting on top of a low bureau and suddenly I noticed, in the dimness, that she had opened the top drawer a bit and her hand was creeping into it—seeking a picture, of course. I sidled over and suddenly gave the drawer a slam. It damn near cut her fingers off and she yelled like an asthmatic bobcat.

Then there was the day Mary's house caught fire. She had been covering a murder trial and was dictating her story to a rewrite man, Clyde Davis recalls, when he interrupted to inform her that fire had broken out in her closet at home. "All right," Mary replied, "but let me finish my story first." Meanwhile her wardrobe was destroyed. "It wouldn't have been so bad except that I had bought a brand-new dress only the day before and it burned up before I ever had a chance to wear it." Roy Howard and Bob Scripps sent word to get a new dress and send the bill.

When the pioneer bore of the Moffat Tunnel was completed on February 27, 1927, Mary was on hand in defiance of the firmly held superstition of tunnel men that a woman underground is the acme of bad-luck omens. Toggled out in men's clothes, her hair bunned up under a cap, she passed for a hard-rock miner and so was present for the holing-through, the first woman to traverse the tunnel. The first man to go through was young Jack Foster. Mary entered from the east portal, Jack from the west. It was a tense and historic moment. The six-mile tunnel under the Continental Divide northwest of Denver would place the city on a direct transcontinental railroad route for the first time. David

Moffat had sunk his entire nine-million-dollar fortune into the dream, and the people of northern Colorado ponied up another fifteen million in a bond issue which is still being paid off. When the last few feet of the viscera of James Peak were blasted aside, Foster scrambled over the debris, grabbed Mary and kissed her, then streaked for the tunnel entrance and a telephone. He got his scoop; the *News* was first on the streets.

Foster scored again a year and a day later, when the main railroad tunnel was completed paralleling the pioneer bore, which had been drilled as an exploratory measure and to provide multiple headings for the drillers. Today the original tunnel carries water through the mountains to keep Denver lawns green. Realization of the long-cherished goal of a railroad under the peaks was, of course, major news in Colorado, and both the *News* and the *Post* made elaborate plans for covering the ceremonial completion and signaling it to the populace. The *Post* announced it would set off bombs the moment word came through. The *News* quietly fixed up its own bombs on the roof of the Welton Street building. Bruce Gustin covered the event for the *Post*, and Foster, now an experienced tunnel specialist, drew the assignment for the *News*. By tying up the only telephone near the entrance, Foster got his flash through first and the *News*' bombs cut loose—thirty-six of them in thunderous succession. "The roar shook the downtown district," he wrote later. "The explosion tore a hole through our roof, broke several panes of glass and shook couples out of each other's arms in the Orient Hotel." The Battle of the Century was at full cry.

Signal bombs, flagpole sitters, and other custard pies were not the only weapons. Scripps-Howard introduced its own brand of reporting and news writing: snappy, brief, simply written, vigorous. The *News* up to this point had never cast off entirely the modes and manners of turn-of-the-century journalism, which impressed itself with long-winded erudition, stentorian tones, and polysyllables. During the Shaffer regime, moreover, the *News* had drowsed off in the coverage of local news. Bob Chase remembers that when he was on the *Express* daily tabulations were made of the number of local stories appearing in the four papers. The *Post*, where Bonfils held to the extreme position that "a dog fight in Champa Street is more important than war in Europe," would have sixty or more stories and items each day. The *Express* crowded out of its skeleton staff and into its poverty-restricted space up to thirty hometown articles daily. But the *News* and *Times* frequently appeared with as few as six or eight local articles, and these were usually lengthy and pontifical. The *Post* still had no editorial page, and any major news story was a witches' brew of policy, warped facts, shibboleth, and sacred cow. The news was regarded on Champa Street merely as a convenient hook on which to display the strong opinions of Bonfils and his lieu-

tenants. The new policy of snap and clarity for the *News* sought to rescue the paper from its recent habits of deadly dullness and would prove, it was hoped, a sparkling contrast to the heavily underscored opinions of the *Post*. The new era on Welton Street was spelled out in a style book which was printed and distributed to all staff members of the *NEWS* papers. Some excerpts:

. . . The general style of these papers aims at simplicity—short words, short sentences, short paragraphs, without excessive punctuation.

We want good writing, but not fancy writing—clear, terse English, which says the thing to be said in the least number of words. We want plenty of life and vitality and color—things which come from simple, vigorous relation of facts, rather than from an over-liberal use of adjectives.

We want brevity, thru the elimination of needless words and details. This is a busy age, and people haven't the time nor inclination to wade thru long-winded stories to pick out a few essential facts.

We want punch. Say your most interesting thing right off the bat, without introduction. Hook the reader's attention, and he will then finish the story.

We want headlines with snap. Tell the essential part of your story in the head, directly and vigorously. Figure that the average reader wants to dodge reading as many stories as possible, in order to do something else, and that it's up to you to grab his attention and hold it.

But in seeking to secure brevity, punch and vigor, never sacrifice accuracy. Above all, these papers must try to be accurate and fair. We need color—but only such color as comes from the relation of facts—not the kind that is supplied by imagination. While we want to take advantage to the fullest of every possibility of a story, this should be done without exaggeration and false emphasis. We mustn't over-praise our friends and belittle our enemies. We are on the sidelines watching the game, in which the players are good and bad, friendly and hostile—and our part is to report it correctly and interestingly.

In starting your story, pick the big fact and say it without pause or introduction, with the same vigor you would display in sending a telegram where every word counted. Get the feature and lead with it.

In choosing between two words, pick the shorter and more common and better understood.

Avoid long qualifying phrases and involved sentences.

We have no blacklists. We have no long rules and taboos; no sacred cows and forbidden subjects; no outside businesses and ambitions. We simply want to print accurate, complete, intelligent and interesting newspapers.

Suggestions and criticisms are welcome. Ideas are always in demand. Originality is forever at a premium. Every reporter and desk man and other employee is invited to contribute suggestions and criticisms and ideas. This isn't a one-man band, nor a twelve-man band. . . .

Do not editorialize in the news columns or headlines. Adjectives

and names which carry with them an editorial opinion are to be avoided outside the editorial columns. The news columns are for straight, unbiased facts, without opinion or editorial emphasis. . . .

Scripps-Howard also "sprazzed up" the office physically, in the phrase of John Lewis. It had been a place of creaking, battered desks, "over which you could drape one leg while pecking at the typewriter." The writing machines were "the oldest and best Underwoods ever made." Along the wall, Lewis remembers, were three stand-up telephones in open booths for use of the reporters. "The city editor for the morning side had a grand, swinging, flexible arm for his telephone so he could push it around to an assistant over the cluttered desks, and a fine, big, insanitary rubber ear guard to aid in hearing. There was running water, of course—we were strictly modern—but that was in the toilets, and the drinking stuff was in a cooler over by the state editor's desk. The ice was always melted by the time the *News* men came in, and the cups were gone, too, so the morning staff took quick gulps from dissolving cups devised of newsprint copy paper. The stomach thus acclimated to sulphite and pulp had little to fear from any but the stronger liquors of those prohibition days."

New desks were added, more telephones, and typewriters recent enough to have standard keyboards. An ingenious hanging microphone and earpiece contraption was rigged up for rewrite men. Staff members were added so rapidly that often there weren't enough typewriters and desks to go around, and reporters beat out their stories in shifts. One day the staff came to work and discovered that the dingy walls, covered with scribbings near every desk, had been painted, thereby destroying forever a fascinating directory of valuable telephone numbers of bootleggers, friendly females, and news sources.

The composing and pressrooms were not neglected. Thirteen new Linotype machines were installed, and Ludlow head-setting equipment. Three new Hoe Decuple presses were put in, one on February 1, 1927, the others a month later. Each had an 80-page capacity and could rev up at 36,000 forty-page papers an hour.

The bustle, the staff-building, and the refurbishing of the *News*, physically and spiritually, did not escape the watchful eye of the Big Brother, of course, not even at the beginning. The *Post* learned as soon as anyone that Jack Foster, Sr., and Max Cook were headed west from the *Cleveland Press*. A letter was dispatched to the opposition paper, the *Cleveland News*, inquiring about what tricks these gentlemen would have up their sleeves. Word came back that they might try localizing serial fiction. Cook had developed the technique for the *Press*. It involved editing of local street names and familiar landmarks into a routine piece of newspaper serial fiction, thereby, it was hoped, increasing local interest. Sometimes the stories were illustrated with photos of a home-

grown beauty who posed as the heroine against a background of recognizable scenes. Recently Cook had applied the local Cleveland touches to Eleanor Meherin's novel, *Chickie*, a bit of titillating fluff which promised more than it delivered in the way of Jazz Age raciness.

The *Post* was not a newspaper to let moss grow on the gears. It bought the rights to *Chickie*, added the home-town embellishments, and persuaded an overdeveloped teenager to pose for the pictures in rolled hose and cloche hat. The camera-struck girl undertook the assignment on speculation. She would get no pay, of course, but she was assured that Hollywood scouts undoubtedly would be watching.

A couple of hitches arose, however. The *Post* made the mistake of shooting only a few advance shots of their cut-price queen, and it developed that Charles Lounsbury of the *News* knew her family. When he explained to mother and father that the heroine of *Chickie* became conspicuously pregnant out of wedlock in the mid-chapters, the *Post* lost its model. There was a confusing switch of heroines abruptly at Chapter Four. It is not recorded whether the *Post's* *Chickie* ever made it to Hollywood; Lounsbury may have deprived the films of a notable bosom.

Then Jack Foster, Sr., issued an order and Tom Dowling brought in a freight-car load, ten thousand copies, of *Chickie* books from Chicago. Anyone could have a copy free by subscribing to the *News* or placing a want ad in the Sunday paper. Moreover Max Cook snapped up the Denver serial rights to Eleanor Meherin's newest sizzler, *Denny*, and it was announced that it would be published in two installments on successive Sundays. The *News* would permit no dawdling while the villain leered and the heroine played coy.

The *Post's* *Chickie* promotion collapsed.

The papers were slugging it out, toe to toe. Soon the sun, no less, became a pawn in the contest. Bonfils took over and supervised a solar eclipse. The *Post* staff astronomer filled the paper for weeks with columns of heavenly statistics, and everyone was invited down to Champa Street—bring your own dark glasses—to see the phenomenon which, it was suggested, had been arranged by Big Brother as a celestial diversion for his many small dependents. A crowd of obedient thousands turned out. But as the sunlight dimmed briefly, an electric sign flickered into life on the roof of a building across the way:

THE SUN IS OUR ONLY RIVAL—AND HE IS OFF THE JOB
Read the NEWSpapers

The coup was humiliating, but Bonfils could shrug it off. After all, the whole affair had cost nothing. What *really* hurt was when the *Evening News* began giving away copies of its early "Peach" edition one afternoon each week just before the *Post* appeared. Hordes of schoolboys

and girls were employed to see that each person on the downtown streets got his "Peach." (So called from the color of the paper; the *Post* used red.) The day of the gratuitous distribution was shifted each week and was a closely held secret. As a result the *Post* was unable to prepare for the inevitable slump in its sales that day, and the circulation department had to "eat" thousands of papers. The horrible cost, it was asserted, drove Bonfils closer to drink than at any time in a wholly abstemious career. A countermeasure was not delayed. For a time the *Morning Post* was deposited free of charge on the doorstep of every non-subscriber on a delivery route—every morning. *That ended that.*

It was a time frantic with "extras." Any transoceanic flight, sashweight murder, or prize fight was occasion to start up the presses off hours and send leather-lunged newsboys whooping through the dark streets to edify readers roused in their nightshirts. Bennie Bee, now a Denver municipal employee but then a *Post* hustler and "world's champion newsboy" by personal fiat of Bonfils, recalls selling six thousand papers on the Sacco-Vanzetti execution. Another of Bennie's feats was to get himself arrested in New York in 1923—he was on a busman's tour "to see how the other half lives," he says—hollering a *Journal* extra so loudly that it disturbed Times Square. Sam Nadler, street circulation manager for the *News*, offered the talented Bennie seventy-five dollars a week plus commissions to switch loyalties. It was more than anyone in the editorial department short of executive rank was getting.

The night of the Dempsey-Tunney fight in September 1927 the *News* parked a large truck at Sixteenth and Champa streets, just around the corner from the *Post* building. Concealed under the tarpaulin were a dozen newsboys. The minute the fight was over they spilled from the truck shouting a fight extra to the crowd gathered in front of the *Post* to hear the "free broadcast" via loudspeakers. The papers were sold out in a few minutes, and it was a mystery how they could have been published so rapidly—until someone took a look at one of them. The fight news in it consisted of a headline announcing the victor, a lead which did the same, and a long story confected out of all the advance information the sports department could lay its hands on. Subsequently it came out that the *News* during the afternoon had printed twenty-five hundred copies heralding a Dempsey victory, a like number for a Tunney win, and all five thousand papers were loaded aboard the truck to await developments. The twenty-five hundred persons who bought the fight extra that night probably account, in part, for the dogged subscriber resistance the *News* later encountered.

Today in Denver, as elsewhere, the newspaper extra is a relic of the past. Changes in newspaper reading habits are partially responsible, along with the fact that more frequent and larger editions keep most newspaper pressrooms humming through much of the publication day. On a fast-breaking story today a newspaper will replate, improving the edition

then running on the presses with a minimum loss of valuable press time. Radio, too, with its unlimited time for "flashes," blunted the effectiveness and salability of the noisy extra.

Radio came to Denver in 1921 when Dr. W. D. Reynolds, a fascinated spare-time follower of Marconi's marvel, moved his pioneer station, KLZ, up from Colorado Springs to broadcast from a residential-area bungalow which sprouted strange antennae. Streams of motorists drove by the Reynolds house to gape at the new wonder of the age. In 1924, KLZ was joined by KOA, one of the earliest 50,000-watt stations.¹ Denver was proud of her big voice of the "ether." It "put this burg on the map" for the avid fans who sat up half the night over cat-whisker crystal sets and one-tube superheterodynes to "get Cincinnati," an accomplishment by which one acquired caste. Today the air waves above Denver are crowded by the signals of five television channels and nineteen radio stations, including one which furthers the mission of the Pillar of Fire religious sect and another which speaks in Spanish.

During the late thirties the *News* co-operated with KVOD in a long series of nightly broadcasts which "re-created" the news of the day. In addition to her other duties of interviews, general assignments, and rewrite, the competent Alberta Pike turned out the script from carbon copies of local stories and the day's wire report. Each person who figured in the news that day was given a speaking part. Staff members who were handy at air time had a script thrust into their hands and became actors. The broadcast originated from among the bound volumes of back issues in the morgue, with the chatter of teleprinters as authenticating background sound. Frank Plumb handled the "character" parts and all dialects, from Chinese to Swahili. Barron B. Beshoar, now Denver bureau manager for *Time-Life* and then the *News'* ace Statehouse man, took any role which called for a political windbag type. The program was one of many local efforts to exploit the "romance" of the newsroom on the air. More recently KLZ-TV brought its television cameras into the *News* city room to focus their big eyes on the controlled madness which is election night coverage.

In 1927 and 1928, however, infant radio had raised no hindrance to the game of extras. When Chamberlin and Levine flew east across the Atlantic in June 1927, on the first non-stop flight to Germany, the *Post* shot off a signal bomb to mark every hundred miles of progress, simultaneously shucking a new extra from its hot presses. Early Sunday morning the marathon stint became wearying. The fliers were close to their goal, and so the *Post* took a chance and closed out the feat with a 1 A.M. extra which announced a safe landing at Berlin. Later in the day, when it became known that the plane had been forced down a few miles short of Berlin, the *News* brought out a hairsplitting extra

¹Hafen, *Colorado and Its People*, Vol. I, pp. 584-85.

which gave the "true facts." Welton Street rubbed it in by giving much of the front page to a photostatic reproduction of the *Post's* final extra. Another sample, the *News* scolded, of how Big Brother was misleading the people of Denver with shoddy and inaccurate journalism. About a month earlier, both papers had plastered the city with extras about the historic crossing of Charles A. Lindbergh. Denver apparently wanted the extras. It bought them like mad, and they contributed their decibels to the general din.

Contests were epidemic. The *Evening News* ran a limerick competition with cash prizes for the "lost lines" and Max Cook behind the scenes as "Limerick Larry." The two NEWSpapers combined to offer a trip around the world to the town's "most popular school teacher." A coupon was printed daily in each paper for the casting of votes. The contest was a spirited and highly popular one, and it gave the *Post*, an experienced ante-raiser, ideas. Champa Street countered with contests for best girl, best stenographer, best fireman. Voting coupons became currency, and Bennie Bee says there was a time when newsboys could get up to twenty-five cents each for papers just before a new voting deadline. Mike Mongone, a local Runyonesque character, reportedly spent nearly \$10,000 trying to win the "best waitress" contest for the pert and popular Ada Cummings of the Edelweiss Restaurant, long the hangout of Denver's dawn patrol (Leonard Cahn of the *News* sports staff, commanding). It is some measure of the frenzy of the contests that Ada didn't win. Perry Clemens, a traffic cop at Fifteenth and Larimer streets, sank \$2000 into coupons to win a \$150 tailor-made uniform which was the prize in the "best policeman" contest.

The *News* was publishing half a full-length novel each Sunday, and serial fiction was sprinkled through the week in an effort to maintain the inflated circulation gains. When the serial *Joy* began running, "The Biggest Night in South Denver's History" was staged on South Broadway, Max Cook recalls. The heroine herself led a parade of allegedly pretty girls down the avenue amid flares, bombs, and the blaring of bands. A crowd of thousands lined the streets, extra streetcars were pressed into service, and the district underwent one of its worst traffic tie-ups.

An elaborate Travel and Service Bureau was opened by the NEWSpapers on Sixteenth Street, Denver's main commercial artery, in the Neusteter Building. Fay Lamphier, national beauty-contest winner, was hostess in charge, and the furnishings set the paper back \$40,000, a tidy sum even in the Coolidge boom times. There was a big globe of the world for a chandelier and a \$1500 mural by Allen True, a leading Denver artist, of the Scripps-Howard lighthouse. The chandelier set the *News* back \$32,000 in itself—and, Roy Howard adds, a dollar was worth one hundred cents in those days. Monthly operating costs exceeded \$1000,

and for this the bureau was expected merely to "be nice" to the public. It was to pass out information and promotional literature to tourists and townspeople, distribute educational pamphlets, receive club and church notices and other handouts and, incidentally, accept want ads. There was a Western Union branch desk, restrooms, a domestic science department, and a conference room which could be booked without charge.

Another activity of the bureau was to operate the News Tour Club, an organization capitalizing on the motorcar craze and giving away free road atlases of the nation at a time when these were not available at every corner filling station. The map of Colorado contained in the atlas shows that the only paved highways in the state linked Denver with Greeley, Boulder, Castle Rock, Golden, and Morrison. There were brief stretches of hardtop on the fringes of a few other major towns.

The sponsoring papers described themselves modestly on the back of the atlas:

Today in Denver, the Rocky Mountain News and Denver Evening News—the NEWSpapers of Denver—are the papers that are read and liked by the substantial, constructive and worthwhile citizens—and the reasons for this are very simple.

The character and ability of the personnel comprising of [sic] their editorial and news-gathering staffs, is unapproached in the Rocky Mountain Region.

Their reporting and interpreting of the news each day is known to be fair, just, liberal and sparkling with lively interest.

Their columns abound in Features of the highest rank—O. O. McIntyre's "New York Day by Day"—daily Editorials by Glenn Frank; daily essays by Dr. Frank Crane; "Just Folks" by Edgar A. Guest; daily humor by Abe Martin.

Financial and Market pages capably edited. The only Book Review page in the Rocky Mountain Region. Church and Religious Activities of Denver given comprehensive, interesting treatment. Sunday articles by the most famous writers of the nation.

Mark Sullivan, Frank T. Simonds, the Reverend Thomas B. Gregory, Lady Mary, J. J. Geller, Bruce Barton, Fannie Hurst, Albert Payson Terhune, Roe Fulkerson, Alexander Woolcott, as well as weekly articles by Roger Babson on "Business Analysis." The Sunday NEWS also is the only newspaper published between the Missouri River and the Pacific Coast having a Rotogravure supplement [not for long; the *Post* soon added one].

These are just a few of the reasons why the NEWSpapers of Denver—The Rocky Mountain News and Denver Evening News—are read and appreciated by all the better class of citizens TODAY in Denver.

In salute to the "better class" element of Denver, Eddie Guest even supplied a personal and touching tribute via the columns of the *News*:

Here is a city where manhood counts.
Here is a city where courage mounts
As high as the peaks of the mountains tall,
Here's where the Flag comes first of all. . . .

Under such blandishments, how could a substantial, constructive, and worth-while citizen resist becoming a subscriber to the NEWSpapers? Especially when one's name might be the cause of the sounding of sirens? (The *News* had a siren on its roof, the *Post* a big bell. The bell tolled and the siren's tail was twisted whenever circulation gains were scored.)

The *News*' shrieking siren was also employed to promote a new serial story, *The Daughter of Midas*. It was fixed to the underside of an airplane, and young Jack Foster was given the privilege of going aloft to operate it in the night skies over the city. Foster held a control button, and each time he pressed it the siren would howl and an electric sign under the wing would light up.

The airplane was still new enough to Denver to make such stunts modest pinnacles of promotional genius. The city's first airways service was inaugurated in May 1926, when a branch line began operating from Pueblo via Denver to Cheyenne to join the main transcontinental route. Colorado Airways Inc. was the operator, and the planes utilized the Don Hogan "airdrome" at East Twenty-sixth Avenue and Oneida Street, an area now planted row on row with residences.² The *News* soon was using Colorado Airways and its successor, Colorado-Wyoming Airways, to carry its papers to Casper and other Wyoming cities "with the speed of the wind."

Arrival of the first airmail plane back in Denver on its northbound flight from Pueblo was made the occasion for an air show.

. . . Unique air stunts in which Diavolo Steiner defied the power of gravity with feats of wing-walking and trapeze stunts followed; later he dropped from the plane in a parachute. . . . Members of four Indian tribes, the Denver & Rio Grande Western band and the G.A.R. fife and drum corps added further entertainment. . . .³

At about the same time Denver's first Lowry Field was established just east of the Park Hill Country Club, then the farm of Clayton College. The field was the home of the Colorado National Guard's 120th Observation Squadron, which droned over the city in surplus DeHavilland biplanes. This area, too, has now grown to homes, but the name of the field is retained for the huge installation of the U. S. Air Force Technical Training Command at which the Air Force Academy

²Ibid., Vol. I, pp. 574.

³*Rocky Mountain News*, June 1, 1926.

got its start. Both fields salute the memory of Francis Brown Lowry, a Denver boy killed in France in 1918.

The young air age soon embroiled the *News* and the *Post* in another battle. The *News*, which takes pride in an unbroken record of support for air progress in Colorado, was boosting the selection of a new site for a municipal airport, now Stapleton Field, farther east from the settled part of Park Hill. The *Post* called the proposal "Brown Cannon's steal" because a local financier, currently in disfavor in the Red Room, owned the land the city planned to buy. An alternate site was suggested—where Bonfils owned land. The *News* frothed at the audacity while the *Post* shouted that the new airport, finally purchased in 1928, was too far out from the city in a "wilderness of sand dunes and Russian thistles." Today the city has grown entirely around Stapleton Field and extension of runways to meet jet transport requirements is a serious problem.

Ammunition in this and other battles was not confined entirely to newsprint, sirens, bells, and low-altitude stunting. Persons unknown tossed a handful of bolts into the *News*' presses, causing extensive damage. For a period guards had to be maintained day and night in the pressroom. Then someone began systematically stealing copies of the morning *News* from the doorsteps of subscribers, and a flood of "I didn't get my paper" complaints swamped the circulation department. The filching ceased when a large cash reward was offered for the arrest and conviction of paper snatchers. Meanwhile the editorial writers made the life of the chief of police a bed of nails for the negligence of his gumshoes in not running down the thieves.

Espionage and counterespionage flourished. The Scripps-Howard executives made a practice of meeting daily in one of their Cosmopolitan Hotel suites to hatch plans and blueprint fresh sorties. At one of these sessions, Max Cook calls to mind, a conferee suddenly pulled a bed away from the wall. There on the floor was a small microphone with wires leading through the wall. Instead of yanking the snooper out by its roots, the staff parley switched to loud discussion of a plan to raise the salaries of all editorial department employees next day. There had been much raiding of staffs back and forth. By coincidence, Bonfils immediately announced salary boosts for all his editorial staff.

The kiddies, of course, were not neglected despite all the distractions of combat. Presumably at great cost, the *News* brought in Peter Pan to operate the Rocky Mountain Sunshine Club, a page of high-level goodies which no self-respecting kid today would touch with tongs. It was assumed, possibly, that all the good, clean, positively motivated little boys and girls in Denver would badger their parents into subscribing to the *News* in order to keep up with the good, clean, syrupy fun.

One of the shrillest crescendos was reached in the great gasoline war. The *News*, with a liberal policy of premiums, took the lead in classified advertising away from the *Post* for the first time in twenty years. On

February 4, 1927, the *News* appeared with 26 pages of classified advertising in a 112-page paper. The 96-page *Post* had only 14 pages of want ads. Bonfils was stung into action. He found a dealer who was willing to pony up in return for the publicity, and the *Post* announced with a fanfare of trumpets that it would give two gallons of gasoline free to every person who took a want ad in the forthcoming Sunday paper. Gasoline then was selling at twenty-one cents a gallon. The *News* immediately countered with an offer of three gallons from any one of twenty service stations around town. The *Post* went to four—after calming its restive petrol merchant with a promise to *pay* him for half the gas, a drastic step which clearly indicates the gravity of the situation. But the *News* would not be bested: five gallons! Bonfils passed, and the *News* had to move desks out onto the sidewalk on Seventeenth Street in front of the Glenarm Place business office to accommodate the crowds of persons who were willing to take a twenty-five cent want ad in exchange for a week's free operation of their cars. The line of ad buyers stretched uptown to the Brown Palace. Police were called out to keep order. Sandwiches and coffee were served. The clerks scribbled fourteen hours straight on Friday and twelve hours on Saturday. The *News* printed fifteen thousand ads—and the victory cost forty thousand dollars. The gasoline-throwing contest was not resumed the following week, although the *News* made sure everyone in Denver knew the *Post* had been licked. A brass band was hired and marched down to Champa Street to serenade the *Post* with "The Old Grey Mare Ain't What She Used to Be" and "Bye, Bye, Blackbird."

In the midst of the hurrah competing newsmen of both papers put aside the bladder and bells to bid farewell to one of the finest of good companions. When Wong Gum Chung went home to China there were tears in the eyes of cynics who could and did betray their best friends for the momentary glory of a scoop. Jim Wong was steward of the Denver Press Club from 1905 to 1927. From the era of Damon Runyon down to the gasoline war he was the warm friend and impassive confidant of every newspaperman in town. He nursed them through hangovers and broken love affairs, gave them wise advice, loaned them cash in financial crises. He worried over his hard-drinking "cyanide kids" and set for them an example of thrift, industry, moderation, and patience which few of them followed. His black hair turned silver in their service, and he taught many of them all they ever learned about being gentlemen.

At one point Jim Wong had been private cook to "Black Jack" Pershing on the Mexican border. At another he operated a restaurant in the mining boom town of Silverton. Then he came to the Press Club. He left briefly three times for trips home to his native village inland from Canton. On the first trip he married and fathered a son. The following two trips yielded daughters. But each time his family remained behind when Jim returned to his post in Denver. On a salary of fifteen

dollars a week—augmented, it was suspected, by manipulations in the Hop Alley lottery—Jim accumulated twenty thousand dollars in gold. The hoard was buried in a vase under the concrete floor of his home in China.

"It will keep all of you for life, in case I don't come back," he told his wife. "Take one gold piece at a time. Each coin will care for you and the children two months."

Lee Casey wrote of Jim:

Every good waiter is courteous and considerate by the very nature of his calling because he devotes his life to the service of others.

Jim Wong was that, and more. He was the wise and kindly guide of a generation of Denver newspapermen, all of whom learned from him something of the graces of irony and urbanity combined with deep understanding and sympathy.

I never knew a better man. I never had a better friend.

Early in 1927, Jim decided to go home to China for good. Denver newspapermen turned out in a body to see him off on the train. A hired instrumental trio played inappropriately cheerful music. Jim wept as the train pulled out, and so did his "cyanide kids." Today his portrait, signed in Chinese, hangs in a place of honor in the Press Club. Autographed pictures of every President since McKinley are relegated to a secondary position. Word came back in 1937 that Jim had died.⁴

The truce declared when Jim went back to China lasted a brief hour or so. When the train departed both sides brushed away sentiment and returned to the tooth-and-claw business at hand. By and large the Battle of the Century was played out on a level of low farce or comic opera, and frivols burr themselves into the memory more deeply than serious grapplings with the contemporary problems, which lose much of their weightiness as time passes. But sober, intelligent journalism was being practiced in Denver along with the capers.

At a time when, according to George Seldes, the impeccable *New York Times* was flirting irresponsibly with a rising young Fascist regime in Italy,⁵ the *Rocky Mountain News* was much less self-consciously hammering away in its own back yard for better schools, an end to prohibition-era lawlessness, unionization of coal miners, planning for the air age, and a dozen other progressive causes. Completion of the vital Moffat Tunnel was one of the *News* campaigns, and the paper lent vigorous support to the rebuilding of Denver's public school system, badly run down during and after World War I. Editorial weight was thrown behind a major bond issue, which eventually carried. The *Post*

⁴Dowell Livesay, "We Remember Jim Wong," *Rocky Mountain Life*, Vol. II, No. 10 (Dec. 1947), p. 17.

⁵George Seldes, *Freedom of the Press* (New York, 1935), pp. 194-214.

was negative. It was trying to run the current school board president out of town for refusal to be dominated, and it viewed with alarm the horrible cost of building schools.

The support given to plans for a municipal airport was only part of a long-term drive by the *News* for improved air facilities. It demanded the beacon-lighting of airways, and urged the painting of town names on barn roofs to guide pilots in a day before the development of radio navigational aids.

Almost alone in the state, and at a heavy cost of popularity among the "right-minded," the *News* pounded away for repeal of the prohibition amendment. It pointed to the unparalleled lawlessness spawned by prohibition, the governmental corruption, the deaths and cases of blindness which resulted from bad liquor. Morality and temperance had been sapped, instead of strengthened, by the attempt to enact self-control, the *News* insisted, and in the process the dignity of the law had suffered. The vast industry of bootlegging was documented in news stories and attacked editorially. Organized crime, with roots in Chicago's gangland and Sicily's Mafia, had come to Colorado. These were unpopular arguments, even with some persons who had a regular bootlegger, but the *News* persisted. The *Post*, again, was on the other side. Bonfils was a strong-minded prohibitionist, and his paper, if not its staff, was as dry as the prairie in August.

There were I.W.W. labor troubles in the Colorado coal fields, and in 1927 state police were used to break a strike. The *News* denounced the strikebreakers and the officials who permitted them to function, and urged the miners to organize themselves in the United Mine Workers as a step toward labor peace.

A long undercover investigation in which Harvey Sethman used his camera to document the alteration of court records with ink eradicators and erasures led to exposure of a crooked receivership ring in Denver and the surrounding suburban area. Sethman wrote a series of articles which opened up a noisome mess in which a number of persons had lost their life savings. The Sethman series resulted in legislative action to revise Colorado's receivership laws. The man who had been mysteriously appointed receiver for a large number of suburban businesses, George W. Beck, was shot and killed in the Kittredge Building barber-shop by one of the victims, and a prominent Denver attorney was disbarred. Many *News* readers probably didn't understand the legal technicalities, though they saw the results, and the paper went on the blacklist of a circle of Denver businessmen and attorneys who were profiting from the secret milking operation.

Loan sharks and usurers came under attacks which later built up into a full-blown campaign that again won legislative revision of statutes. News stories and columns by Lee Casey exposed shocking conditions of brutality and neglect in the Colorado State Penitentiary at Cañon

City, and there were editorial demands for reform long before the series of bloody, fiery riots which shook the prison.

As the automobile age advanced small towns set up speed traps for motorists as a means of augmenting local revenues. The courts of rustic justices of the peace became centers of legalized brigandage. The *News*, always a champion of the horseless carriage and its devotees, set up a clamor against the parasite towns, losing subscribers in each.

Many of these campaigns took the unpopular side, and they cost the paper as much in public acceptance, advertising support, and circulation as was won by the frantic promotions, the giveaways, and the gimmicks. Yet they were clung to with the same courage and constancy that Byers had displayed in his fights with the Bummers. The era was not entirely one of froth and feathers.

There were some gains, of course. Advertisers began coming back to the *News* in spite of the penalties this cost them in higher rates at the *Post*. During 1926, *News* circulation was 29,933 mornings, 24,521 evenings, and 55,589 Sundays. This went to 40,033 morning, 51,722 evening, and 93,701 Sunday in 1928. The high point was 110,000 briefly for the Sunday *News*. And the cost in dollars and nervous energy was disproportionate.

It had been a wonderful, mad, exciting battle for the journalistic troops which fought it. They became so enthralled and exhilarated by their stunts and scoops that they forgot to notice that the town was growing weary of the turmoil. The public was sick of nerve-shattering bombs and the bragging, promotional prose which filled both papers. A diet of flagpole sitters for breakfast and lady wrestlers for supper began to pall. Merchants were becoming annoyed at their role of shuttlecock between the battledores of the papers' advertising departments.

The two men who had to pay the bills became very weary of ladling red ink. Scripps-Howard, it was disclosed later, lost nearly three million dollars in two years scoring a few inconclusive victories. Bonfils, in turn, had sunk an estimated two million into his *Morning Post*. The Baby Elephant had turned out to be a white one. Its drains on the money-making afternoon *Post* were disclosed a few years later, in 1930, when Bon almost sold out. An audit then disclosed that the *Post* in 1920 had gone into the charmed and exclusive circle of American newspapers earning more than a million dollars a year. During the subsequent decade the only years when earnings dropped below the million mark were 1927 and 1928, when the *Morning Post* was contesting with the *News*.⁶

Both Roy Howard and Bonfils were ready to call off the shooting match.

The *News* had spent heavily, won a few gains, taken fair measure of the *Morning Post*, but had done little to disturb the dominance of the

⁶Fowler, *Timber Line*, p. 468.

evening *Post*. Looking back in the inexpensive freedom of hindsight, a couple of errors in policy and tactics seem evident. Scripps-Howard abandoned in Denver the prudent operating methods which were serving it well in a score of other cities. The thrill of a battle for mile-high stakes put the whole affair on a plane of highly charged emotional stimulation. Vital energies, and much gold, were drained off in larking on the battlements. Moreover the enemy was permitted to choose both weapons and battleground. The *Post*, quite naturally, chose ballyhoo: Houdini hanging by his heels, crazy-quilt contests, bathing beauties in sham snowball fights, a pack of mongrels turned loose in City Hall, Indian war dances in Champa Street, and picnics at the Old Ladies' Home—with someone else providing the lemonade. The battlefield was a circus arena, and Bonfils was the man who *owned* a circus. The *News* was an awkward amateur.

Thus the time came for Roy Howard to make another speech to the Denver Chamber of Commerce.

The date was November 9, 1928. Bob Chase covered the luncheon meeting and wrote the story. Attendance records again were shattered. Some three hundred and fifty businessmen crowded in with an anticipatory tenseness as great as they had displayed two years earlier. There weren't enough seats to go around, and some of the commercial leaders had to stand in the doorway.

Bon was to have spoken, too, but he was ill and sent his nephew, Major F. W. Bonfils, the *Post's* business manager, to represent him. The younger Bonfils made public the five-million-dollar loss figure and the weariness of the gladiators.

Tyson Dines, president of the chamber, commented hopefully on the "beginning of a golden age in Denver" and disclosed that "the lion and the lamb have lain down together" without designating which was which.

Then it was Howard's turn to speak. He ended the fight in the same crisp good humor with which he had started it.

"In closing some brief and expensive remarks before this club two years ago," he began, "I referred to the fact that the challenger never looks as good as the champion before the fight.

"Having tested that, I want to say that the challenger does not of necessity look as good as the champion *after* the fight.

"Two years ago, when I spoke before you, I had no notes. As a consequence I have been signing notes since that time. Today I speak from notes."

He pointed out that he was wearing the same suit he had worn to the earlier luncheon. "I have heard it said here in Denver that we have lost our shirt. I want to demonstrate that, even so, we have saved the coat and pants."

Negotiations had been concluded Sunday night. Bonfils had purchased

the *Evening News*, Scripps-Howard the *Morning Post*. Both papers suspended, hastily, with their editions of Monday, November 5. At the same time the remaining papers, the morning *News* and the evening *Post*, raised their prices to three cents daily and ten cents Sunday from two cents and five cents. Howard, as chairman of the board of Scripps-Howard Newspapers, had written a by-line piece for page one of the Monday *News*:

In the interest of progress and welfare of the community and in response to the economic demands of the situation, the Denver newspaper publishers today announce the reduction of the local field to one morning, one evening and two Sunday morning papers. . . .

The move is designed to correct a situation which has proved itself unsound, wasteful and prejudicial to both the publishers and the business interests of Denver. It is a move in harmony with the spirit and the tendency of the times—with the national movement to eliminate waste and duplication of effort in the interest of better service to the public. . . .

During the two years . . . Denver has witnessed a journalistic duel that has had few equals in recent years, either from the standpoint of spectacularity or on the basis of expenditures involved. Fortune has flirted with both sides and advantages have been won and lost.

The *Evening News* has been one of the best newspapers in the nationwide chain. It has been more conservative in both dress and character, more condensed and less colorful than its competitor, the *Denver Post*. . . .

The plain truth of the matter, plus a sportsmanlike desire to give credit where credit is due, compels the frank admission that after having been offered two years' opportunity to judge of a result which had involved the employment of much ingenuity and the expenditure of several million dollars, an overwhelming majority of the people of Denver and the adjacent newspaper field continued their preference for the type of evening paper produced by F. G. Bonfils in *The Evening Post*, rather than for the type offered by Scripps-Howard in *The Evening News*.

After two years of editorial enterprise and expensive effort on the part of *The Evening News* there has been a material increase in both circulation and advertising patronage. This support has not been sufficient, however, to indicate a change in the evening newspaper reading habit great enough to constitute an actual demand for a second evening paper.

On the other hand, *The Rocky Mountain News* under Scripps-Howard management has enjoyed a re-birth. Its circulation has more than doubled. It is obviously filling a niche that is all its own and is meeting a well-defined demand. Coincidentally, the *Denver Morning Post* has been facing all the resistance and the heavy expenditures that are the inevitable fate of a pioneering experiment in the field of journalism. . . .

Without a grouch or a grudge, The Denver Evening News salutes its surviving competitor in the evening field, The Denver Post, and wishes it success. It has been a good fight. Neither alibis nor excuses are in order. None will be offered.

On the other hand, The Rocky Mountain News, proud of its achievements and of the cordial support it has received, welcomes the new order of things and steps forward to the task of supplying Denver's morning newspaper needs with a full sense of its new opportunity and its new responsibility, and with a determination to give to this community the best that money and effort will produce in the way of a well-balanced, highly informative, ultra-modern morning newspaper. . . .

Howard wrote that the Associated Press service also would return to the columns of the *News*. The AP had been dropped, he explained, because its rules would have prevented the *Evening News* from passing on its news to the other twenty-four Scripps-Howard papers, all of which were using United Press exclusively. The *Rocky Mountain News* would be the only morning paper in the organization, and thus there would be no conflict with AP bylaws.

To the Chamber of Commerce luncheon Howard offered more intimate details on the transaction. The unlamented newspaper war, he said, had been something like a duel of two snapping turtles, which, according to superstition, "never let go until it thunders." He had gone to Bonfils and "talked like thunder. . . . I thought it was time for both of us to get in out of the wet." The war also was putting both papers "in contempt of their public."⁷

He expressed regret that his honorable opponent had been kept away from the luncheon. A cold was responsible, "not any deafness as a result of our conferences.

"By his absence, I have the advantage of Mr. Bonfils," Howard said. "I might add, parenthetically, that this is one of the few occasions on which I could claim that distinction." He referred to the presidential election earlier that week. Al Smith had got the applause but Hoover the votes. "Two years ago you gave me your applause and you very largely gave Mr. Bonfils your subscriptions and your advertising. Today I feel particularly big hearted—and I'll be entirely forgiving if you reverse the process."

Chairman Dines had held up an orange as symbol of the new golden age dawning. Howard commented wryly that he had been "under the impression we were growing lemons in Denver," and he mused that running a newspaper is like playing shortstop: "One must accept a lot of chances and handle them rapidly. The runner will not wait while you decide whether to throw to first or second."

⁷*Editor & Publisher*, Vol. 61, No. 25 (Nov. 10, 1928), p. 25.

But now, he said, beanball pitching, venom, unfair practices, and discriminatory rates were at an end.

There would be no ending of lusty competition, of course, but "arguments will be conducted with facts, rather than gasoline."

And so an armistice came to the Battle of the Century.

Dark Days in the Far West

NEXT came the lean and hungry years, the tempering. Adversity, boon companion of a youthful frontier newspaper, returned to live with the *Rocky Mountain News* as it had in those young seasons when marauding Indians cut off supplies of paper for printing or plunged Denver into isolation by tearing down the telegraph lines. The belt was drawn tight again to the farther notches.

Such had been the progress of life and journalism toward economic complexity, however, that poverty itself was expensive. It would be nearly two decades before black ink returned to the ledgers of the *News* with any consistency, and in that bleak interval another half million dollars were lost in the sorry business of just hanging on. But the talent for survival reasserted itself, and the *News* did hang on. Roy Howard stood fast. Fortunately his purse by now was a deep one, though it is small wonder he felt impelled to reach for the antacid pills whenever the thought of Denver crossed his mind.

The armistice was a quiet one. No one was in a mood for crowing. Flags remained furled and bunting in storage. No medals were passed out to ink-stained warriors. When the fight had been hot the fine, brave noise of lusty smittings had carried into the city rooms of the most remote newspapers in America. Adventurous mercenaries had hurried to the colors—and fattened pay checks—from all quarters. Now the exodus was as rapid as the influx had been. The cheerless task of marching patrol on the chill battleground was left to the winter soldiers, the old pros, the hard-bitten mustangs.

Demobilization on Champa Street was abrupt. Virtually the entire staff of the *Morning Post* was summarily discharged, with neither thanks nor dismissal pay. H. Allen Smith, who had cannily acquired a skill in the highly specialized field of reporting Bonfils doings for Bonfils papers, was retained. Others departed, among them Joe Alex Morris. Morris is remembered in Denver as a fired-up cub, fresh out of the University of Missouri journalism school, who bounced onto the *Morning Post* staff in 1927 just in time to have his head chopped off a few months later. He moved on to the United Press in Washington and a distinguished career as correspondent and foreign editor. Recently, after terms

as foreign editor of the New York *Herald Tribune* and managing editor of *Collier's*, Morris has been biographer of the United Press in *Deadline Every Minute*.

On Welton Street the firings were fewer. Some staff members put in for transfers to other and more hopefully situated Scripps-Howard papers. Some wandered away on their own volition to try their luck in foreign print shops. The dispirited or grimly tenacious remnants of the staffs of the NEWSpapers were merged into one force for the *Rocky Mountain News*. Morale was low. The high crusade—run the *Post* out of town—had failed in its mission of journalistic sanitation.

Gloom sat on the typewriters in the second-floor city room on Welton Street. It didn't help at all that the whole town believed the *News* had taken a horrible licking. Certainly it appeared that way, and the *Post* emerged as cock of the walk for years to come. Actually, however, the two-year war ended in a much more even draw than anyone suspected at the time, and the last blow in the hostilities was scored by Roy Howard. Considering the shrewd ways and parsimonious nature of his opponent, it was a crowning stroke.

Howard was hurt. There was no doubt about that. The balance sheets on his Denver foray ran red with a \$2,300,000 deficit. And it was he who initiated the peace talks. But Bonfils was hurt too. He admitted publicly to a loss of two million plus. How deeply this cut—or how much unadmitted red ink was flowing—can now be indicated for the first time.

Bonfils was so anxious to kill his till-tapping *Morning Post* and get in out of the wet that he laid a quarter of a million dollars in *cold cash* on the line!

In major newspaper negotiations today a quarter million, give or take, would scarcely justify exclamatory punctuation. But this was 1928, when any major fraction of a million dollars still had shock power, and the man who paid out the dollars was Fred Bonfils. The same man who once lectured George Creel on the evils of overtipping waiters and who required that his own relatives dig down at the ticket wagon for admittance to his Sells-Floto circus.

Suspension of the directly competing papers was accomplished by cross purchase. No money changed hands in this phase of the bargaining. Scripps-Howard bought the *Morning Post*, Bonfils the *Evening News*, and the nominal values of the papers were assumed to be exactly equal. Then Howard submitted the proposition that his getting out of the evening field represented a greater sacrifice than Bon's retiring from morning journalism. A cumshaw of \$250,000 ought to about square things. Bonfils, pained by the expensive appetites of his two-year-old Baby Elephant, sighed and agreed. Possibly he was not at his best at this point. His sensitivities were sorely troubled, and the distractions of unaccustomed deficits perhaps threw him off balance as a bargainer. At

any rate the man from New York again bested at his own game a dealer generally conceded to have been one of the keenest, toughest operators in American journalism.

As it turned out the deal, so far as Howard was concerned, was incidental to a Wyoming elk hunt.

"A bunch of us were up in the Bridger Lakes region after elk," Howard remembers. "T. Joe Cahill arranged the hunt for us, out of Cody. T. Joe then was Wyoming's fish and game chief. I got myself an old bull. Old and tough. It took four shots to put him down. That was on October 28.

"Well, once I had my elk I broke off the hunt, hopped a train and went down to Denver. On Tuesday, that would be October 30, I paid a call on Bon at his office. Bon was all courtesy and grace that day. I laid it on the line to him.

"'Fred,' I told him, 'we're beating each other's brains out and getting nowhere. We both have enough money to keep this thing going as long as the other guy. Unless you get some sadistic thrill out of this, I propose we call it off.'

"Bon leaned over and tapped me on the knee in that fatherly way of his. 'Why, Roy,' he said, 'how can you say such a thing? There has never been anything sadistic in my relationship with you or your newspaper.' He pretended to be shocked that I had used the word."

Howard outlined his proposal for a truce. "Sounds very interesting," Bonfils said. For the next five days the two publishers met daily in Howard's suite at the Cosmopolitan Hotel. Two sessions a day, ten to twelve, two to five, and Bon always was punctual.

"After the second day, Bonfils started going over and over the same ground," Howard says. "It puzzled me until I finally tumbled to what he was up to. The old fox was trying to trap me in a lie. I wasn't trying to be foxy at all. Bon was too slick and too smart for that, and I knew it. He was devious and he was smooth.

"Finally, when he decided he wasn't going to catch me in a changed story, he turned on the charm and we closed out the deal in forty-five minutes. I've been in thirty-five different newspaper purchases and deals in my time, and never one easier than this one once Bon was satisfied I was dealing off the top of the deck, and that I was giving him a true picture of our intentions and abilities. Bonfils knew every phase of his business intimately. Prodigious memory."

The bargain was wrapped up on Sunday night, November 4. Along with the cross-purchase arrangement and the cash settlement, a three-year agreement was reached—and signed next day—for a laundering of Denver journalism. Bon agreed to put away the lead pipe. He promised he would not "solicit, make or accept" advertising contracts with "rates, rebates, position, etc." that would penalize the *News*. Despite his able memory, this clause of the agreement apparently slipped his mind after

a short while. Advertising managers of the two papers were to meet and agree on classification of local and national advertising for rate-making purposes. There would be no more circulation contests, premiums, bonuses to street sellers. It was agreed that the *Post's* hours of publication would be 9 A.M. to 9 P.M., those of the *News* from 9 P.M. to 9 A.M. Neither Sunday paper would appear before six Saturday evening. Cass Herrington, who had been Bonfils' attorney through the negotiations, was to referee any dispute which might arise. By telegraph, Kent Cooper, chief of the Associated Press, gave his blessing to a transfer of the *Morning Post's* AP franchise back to the *News*. After details were smoothed out the publishers sat down and drafted statements for their respective Monday papers, and Howard fired a wire to Bob Scripps: **CLOSED DEAL TONIGHT STOP WE RECEIVE QUARTER MILLION.**

When Bonfils unexpectedly fell for the cash-settlement proposal Howard generously proposed that the matter be held in confidence to permit the proud Corsican to save face. Bon's sense of personal dignity was as stiff as that pride of body which gave him a carriage like a formal sentry's. His secret has been kept for thirty years and is revealed now for the first time. No word of it appeared in the truce announcements printed by the *News* and *Post*, although *Editor & Publisher* in its report of the transaction indicated there had been a sweetening of the deal.¹ The *Editor & Publisher* report never received confirmation from Scripps-Howard or the Red Room, and Howard sent Bonfils a note from New York on November 16 expressing hope that his cold was better and reassuring him that *E&P's* speculations were not based on anything Scripps-Howard had disclosed.

The quarter million was nearly enough to keep the *News* afloat through the years of dolor ahead. From December 1928 through 1942, Scripps-Howard records show, the *News* lost about \$400,000. Bon's \$250,000 went a long way toward paying the bill for the holding operation while the *News* struggled to re-establish a success formula.

Reflections on this wry quirk of fortune probably deepened Bonfils' distaste for "foreigners," and the *Post* always had made a fetish of blatant provincialism. Sulphuric comments on the "invasion of Denver" by the "foreign-owned press" had been, in fact, the *Post's* first salvo when Scripps-Howard came to town, though why Roy Howard was an invader and Shaffer had not been was never explained to Champa Street's many little brothers. In his first speech to the Chamber of Commerce, Howard had quipped that the *Post's* fuss about foreigners may have led his listeners to expect they would be addressed by "a Chinese mandarin, a Persian shah or a Bulgarian peasant." Scripps-Howard, he pointed out, was no more an alien to Rocky Mountain shores than the Union Pacific Railroad, the Swift Packing Company, or any one of a number of big

¹*Editor & Publisher*, Vol. 61, No. 25 (Nov. 10, 1928).

organizations which contributed sizably to the Denver economy. Howard also might have reminded Bonfils that he and Tammien had been foreigners themselves when they operated the noisy *Kansas City Post* from 1909 to 1922. They had departed Kansas City taking \$1,290,000 out. Scripps-Howard poured \$3,300,000 into Denver before a cent flowed in the opposite direction.

William G. Chandler, then president of the Ohio group of Scripps-Howard newspapers and later general business manager and president of the Scripps-Howard Supply Company, was on the scene in Denver when the battle started and took special interest in its fiscal logistics. He notes that it would have been extremely unlikely that an individual publisher, be he ever so native to the banks of the Platte, would have had the resources to make the fight Scripps-Howard did. Silas Bent called it "Denver's Holy Newspaper War" in the *Independent*,² and if virtue did not triumph in this instance other worthy crusades also have been known to fall short of laudable objectives.

Certainly in terms of mere survival it was fortunate that Colorado's oldest newspaper at this point was a member of a family of broad and well-developed resources. Family connections saw the *News* through its hour of gloom and then through nearly a quarter century of financial drouth such as would have impoverished an individual or local owner. The family, moreover, could weigh certain intangibles against the harsh facts of perennial operating losses and achieve a balance forbidden to a purely local ownership.

"Under Jim Scripps our papers had been hog-tied to their budgets," Bill Chandler says. "Roy was and is a fighter. When he went into that Denver situation with his eyes wide open, he wanted to let people know that individual Scripps-Howard papers would and could fight. That they would and could fight *back* and were not sitting ducks dependent entirely on their own local resources. Specifically, he wanted to show that the *Rocky Mountain News* would fight, if necessary, and would spend, if necessary.

"It was news to everyone in the country that anyone would dare to spit in Bon's eye. We feel the losses in Denver were more than paid off in other cities by the prestige won in making that fight."

The *News* in its time of need thus had the advantages of the unorthodox system of operating policy which Roy Howard built and extended along the patterns E. W. Scripps had cut out. It is a system not often employed among corporations of large geographical span and is wholly unique among national newspaper organizations. It is not generally understood and on occasion has been willfully misunderstood by critics who raise monolithic specters of absentee control over the information and comment available to 3,026,724 readers of nineteen papers

²*Independent*, May 21, 1927.

in eighteen major cities.³ In practice the Scripps-Howard system combines the efficiency and economy of nationwide services—editorial, financial, housekeeping, supply, legal—with a maximum of local policy-making freedom and responsibility. No regional vice-president of a national corporation enjoys a fraction of the independence exercised daily by the editor of a Scripps-Howard paper. The editor does not take policy problems to the general management for solution, and there are no “musts” among the editorials, news dispatches, and feature articles available to him through the various Scripps-Howard services. An editorial on national affairs written in Washington may be published in San Francisco and Pittsburgh, and hit the wastebasket in Houston and New York. It is no more a “canned” editorial than would be a similar essay drafted for the *New York Times* in Washington under the guidance of James Reston. Scripps-Howard papers are not edited with a cookie cutter. They are, in fact, highly individualistic journals, and in some cities—notably Cleveland, Memphis, and Denver—they have built reputations through many years of community service and civic participation as intensely “local” institutions.

The pooling of resources provides the individual papers, in times of disasters comparable to Bonfils, the sort of comforting cushion which caught the *News* and sustained it through the thirties and forties. It also makes possible national and international coverage of Pulitzer prize stature such as is denied to all but a handful of the largest and wealthiest of wholly local newspapers. Few isolated papers can afford a Washington bureau of the quality which offers to Scripps-Howard papers the skills of men like Andrew Tully, Charles T. Lucey, and a dozen other talented capital correspondents. Foreign correspondence of the caliber of Jim Lucas and the late Ernie Pyle also is beyond the means of most papers. Yet services of this nature are available as much to the modest *Evansville Press* and *Albuquerque Tribune* as to the metropolitan *World-Telegram and Sun*.

This familial relationship is unclear to many persons. Perhaps a run-down on the structure of Scripps-Howard is needed to clarify the position the *Rocky Mountain News* has occupied since November 1926.

Scripps-Howard is not in itself a corporation. Each newspaper is published by a separate corporation. In the case of the *News* the corporate entity is the Denver Publishing Company, incorporated under the laws of the state of Colorado.

A majority of the stock in each Scripps-Howard newspaper is held by

³In addition to the *Rocky Mountain News*, member papers of the organization today are: *Albuquerque Tribune*, *Birmingham Post-Herald*, *Cincinnati Post and Times-Star*, *Cleveland Press*, *Columbus Citizen*, *El Paso Herald-Post*, *Evansville Press*, *Fort Worth Press*, *Houston Press*, *Indianapolis Times*, *Kentucky Post* (Covington), *Knoxville News-Sentinel*, *Memphis Commercial Appeal*, *Memphis Press-Scimitar*, *New York World-Telegram and Sun*, *Pittsburgh Press*, *San Francisco News*, and *Washington News*.

the E. W. Scripps Company, with headquarters in Cincinnati. Jack R. Howard, Roy's forty-eight-year-old son and a seasoned newsman who deliberately beat his way up the ranks, succeeded his father as president of the Scripps Company on January 1, 1953.⁴ At the same time Charles E. Scripps, second eldest (then thirty-three) grandson of old E.W., took over from W. W. Hawkins as chairman of the board. Although, like Jack Howard, he was an heir apparent, six-foot Charles Scripps shared young Howard's distaste for learning the business from the top down. He also has worked as a reporter for his own and other newspapers, and a year of this self-imposed apprenticeship was spent on the staff of the *Rocky Mountain News*.

Fortune has described the E. W. Scripps Company as "dynastic in matters of control, informal in methods of organization, and all but imperial in dimensions." It has grown from a \$28,000 operation in 1879 to \$28,000,000 in 1925—the last full year of E. W. Scripps' life—to \$50,000,000 in 1940 and on to \$140,000,000 in the 1950s when Roy Howard and Hawkins, Charles Scripps' stepfather, moved aside to make way for the younger men. Roy's voice continues to be heard in the top echelons as chairman of the executive committee, and he also retains the position of editor of the *World-Telegram and Sun*.

The Scripps Company holds the controlling interest in the *Rocky Mountain News*. There are 10,000 shares of capital stock in the Denver Publishing Company. Of these, 2500 shares are common voting stock and 7500 are non-voting. The Scripps Company owns all 2500 voting and 6500 of the non-voting shares. The remaining 1000 shares are locally held.

Approximately seventy-five per cent of the Scripps Company, in turn, is owned by the E. W. Scripps Trust, the family trust set up by E.W. to establish succession of his heirs to the newspaper empire he created. Under terms of E.W.'s will his third son, Robert Paine Scripps, was sole trustee until his death in 1938, when Roy Howard became an interim trustee until Bob Scripps' sons attained their majorities. Today Charles Scripps is chairman of the family board of trustees. His elder brother, Robert P. Scripps, Jr., is vice-chairman, but he inherited a love of the soil from his grandfather and prefers ranching at Pecos, Texas, to active newspapering. The third trustee is Edward W. (Ted) Scripps II, youngest of Bob Scripps' sons. In the pattern of his brother Charles, Ted is learning the business as a non-titled employee of his own papers. During the past two years he has been a working member of the *Rocky Mountain News* staff, covering general assignments and the Statehouse as a reporter and writing a Sunday column. An affable and unassuming young man, he occupies a rank-and-file reporter's desk in the *News* city room and moves quietly through the day-to-day clatter. (Ted has been initiated into the

⁴*Newsweek*, Sept. 29, 1952; *Fortune*, Oct. 1953.

raffish traditions of Denver journalism at the irreverent annual banquet which memorializes a deceased *Post* political reporter who was cordially disliked, built a reputation on other men's work, and welshed on his gin-rummy debts. A leading lobbyist and notable victim of the welshing is host to the Statehouse press corps for the dinner, held during the session of the state legislature. Veteran newsmen who knew the deceased are asked to comment on his career, and a formal effort is made each year to speak well of the dead. The effort never comes off. It quickly progresses into a scandalous anthology of excoriating anecdotes punctuated by toasts to the departed brother, wherever he may be.)

The E. W. Scripps Trust, through the Scripps Company, also holds a controlling interest in the affiliated enterprises: United Press International, UPI Newspictures, the Newspaper Enterprise Association, United Feature Syndicate, and Scripps-Howard Radio Inc., of which Jack Howard also is president. Scripps-Howard Radio operates WEWS-TV in Cleveland, WCPO and WCPO-TV in Cincinnati, and WNOX in Knoxville. Roy Howard shares ownership with the Scripps heirs as holder of the largest minority interest in the Scripps Company. The family trust maintains headquarters with those of the Scripps Company in Cincinnati.

The Scripps-Howard Supply Company, headed by William G. Chandler as president, has its main office in New York and its operating base in Cleveland. Legal department for the complex also is in Cleveland, along with the main editorial and business offices of NEA.

Employees of the nineteen newspapers have the opportunity of sharing in ownership through the Scripps-Howard Investment Company, a non-operating company with an unsalaried board of directors. The investment company holds stock in most of the newspapers. Its own shares carry a nominal par value and have a record of well above average earnings for the thousands of employees who have put savings into them.

The general management of the Scripps-Howard newspapers functions from the twenty-second floor of the Grand Central Building at 230 Park Avenue in New York City. The outfit never has been much for show. Its general offices are Spartan-plain and somber in décor, almost shabby when compared with the lavish showcases in which many a smaller organization installs its top executives. The office of Roy Howard, who picked up an affection for the Orient on his world travels, is furnished to his taste in Chinese lacquers. Jack Howard occupies a smaller, unglorified office nearby.

He serves as general editorial manager of the concern, with Jack H. Lockhart as his assistant. Also in the top management group are Roy Howard, Bill Chandler, and Mark Ferree, general business manager. For major policy-making sessions, Charles Scripps flies in from Cincinnati (sometimes piloting the company airplane himself) and editor in chief Walker Stone comes up from Washington.

Washington is editorial headquarters for the chain, as to both foreign and national news. The editorial services are accomplished through the Scripps-Howard Newspaper Alliance, home base for the string of capital and foreign correspondents, editorial writers, and columnists whose work is available to member papers. Frank R. Ford is SHNA editor. Working with him are the bearers of such familiar by-lines as Ludwell Denny, Jim Lucas, Charles T. Lucey, Daniel M. Kidney, Fred W. Perkins, Dickson Preston, Andrew Tully, John Troan, R. H. Shackford, Jack Steele, Marshall McNeil, Oland D. Russell, Gene Wortsman, Ruth Finney, Mrs. Walter Ferguson (from Tulsa), and Albert M. Colegrove (from San Francisco). H. M. Talburt, whose editorial cartoons are a regular feature of most Scripps-Howard papers, also works in Washington.

How does this all work out in the daily whirl of news gathering and publishing?

The late John H. Sorrells, then executive editor for the chain, explained it this way:

The General Management has administrative authority with respect to all of the newspapers: it selects editors and business managers, formulates certain over-all policies—editorial and business—and gives counsel and direction to editors and business managers as circumstances require.

The local managers have wide discretion in the formulation of local policy and the direction of local activities. While business practices do not vary greatly between papers and cities, editorial and news policies derive primarily from local and regional conditions and interests. Scripps-Howard editors have broad powers of decision in such matters.

Scripps-Howard editors also have a defined responsibility and authority with respect to certain matters of internal policy on the newspapers. A major concept in Scripps-Howard is the idea that its canons of good taste must apply to all departments equally, hence the final authority, and responsibility, for determining the acceptability of advertising rests on the editor. As a corollary to this, and to give force to the editor's hand, the composing room is under his control and direction.⁵

Fortune magazine took a look at the operation at the time Jack Howard and Charles Scripps moved into command and reported:

The precise status and authority of the young men are no more subject to exact definition than those of the men who preceded them. Nothing is more perishable than daily journalism's commodity, the solid but fleeting facts that can only be sold fresh. To sell them profitably, important decisions on publishing and editorial policy must be made regularly to give passing news continuing acceptability. But Scripps-Howard's top decisions have never emerged from an organizational chart. The complexities of this business made group deliberation

⁵Sorrells, op. cit., pp. 15-16.

necessary long before the appearance of committees in other large enterprises and led to delegation of authority long before the word decentralization was used by such companies as General Motors. . . .

Since it is unlikely that newspapers are going to cost less to produce, the long-run profitability of Scripps-Howard depends on marketing decisions. And the marketing of Scripps-Howard's highly perishable commodity is no small undertaking in a world deafened with noises and alarms, and sated with something as sensational as the possibility of being blown to bits.

In the news business generally, decisions do not emerge by standard corporation practices. Part of the policy at Scripps-Howard, for instance, consists of having no policies about the United Press, an asset to the company only so long as it is independent. Editorial policy on local and state issues is settled by local editors. Policy on important national affairs is set by all the editors and the top executives at a formal once-a-year conclave and by frequent informal discussions, queries, and suggestions over leased wires. Among top executives it is impossible to state the exact sphere of any man's activities, except for special functions like soliciting advertising and buying newsprint. It can be said that management in Scripps-Howard dictates very little.⁶

In his recent autobiography Louis B. Seltzer, sometimes known as "Mr. Cleveland," writes of his appointment to the editorship of E. W. Scripps' first paper, the *Cleveland Press*:

In a measure greater than any other newspaper organization in America, the Scripps-Howard concern has traditionally accorded independent judgment to its individual editors. I was to make use of this latitude in the future, not infrequently to the acute distress of Roy Howard and others in the ownership and management of the papers. Their unswerving support, even when I am sure they believed me to be wrong, is one of the most gratifying aspects of my approximately forty years with Scripps-Howard.⁷

This, then, is the structure and gearing of the outfit which backed up the *Rocky Mountain News* as it emerged, bloody but unvanquished, from the bout with Fred Bonfils. Changes came to the *News*. Mostly they were of the scrimping sort that accompany poverty. At one point reporters and copyreaders were required to turn in the stub of a copy pencil before they could requisition a new one. And sometimes the advertising in a single issue was scarcely sufficient to cover the cost of the copy pencils worn down in preparing it.

Changes came to the *News*, and also to Bonfils. The settlement seemed to sadden him. Perhaps he came to realize that over the long haul he couldn't win. Certainly he had not parted blithely with the

⁶*Fortune*, Oct. 1953, pp. 167, 176.

⁷Louis B. Seltzer, *The Years Were Good* (New York, 1956), p. 176.

quarter million dollars he paid for the privilege of getting out of a fight. He had, indeed, lost face, even if no one in Denver knew it. Bon was a brooder, and a brooder, with his private stocks of secret woes, can suffer internally though all the world proclaim him a tranquil conqueror. Bonfils' essay at morning journalism had proved a costly experiment, and yet it must have pained the parent to kill off his baby before the toddler was two years old. And the expectations for its future had been so high. But now the infant paragon was gone, without once having a chance to prove how it worshiped the right and the good and the beautiful.

Whatever the sources of his discontent, Bonfils became in the next few years a subdued and even lonelier man. A worrisome little frown creased his noble brow. His moods were brittle, sad, and philosophic. He seemed to become less assured. For the first time he began to be sensitive to criticism. He was cut by man's ingratitude, and hurt that Denver didn't accept him as the benefactor of humankind and Big Brother he wanted to appear and perhaps in his odd logic actually believed himself to be.

He spoke often, in conversation and in print, about the need for devotion to the common weal. Gene Fowler has recalled how Bon conceived the notion that Colorado's No. 1 auto license plate, held for years by a pioneer motorist, should be conferred instead upon the state's "worthiest citizen"—as selected by the *Denver Post*. The idea caught on. During the first year the distinctive license plate went to Emily Griffith, founder and principal of Denver's Opportunity School, a pioneer center in the American adult-education movement. The town applauded. Denver has always been proud of Emily Griffith and her school, where thousands of immigrants have been taught English and the Constitution and hordes of workingmen and women have learned trades or qualified for high school diplomas by off-hours study. Yes, spunky little Emily Griffith surely was Denver's "worthiest citizen."

The following year the No. 1 license was fixed to the automobile of Fred G. Bonfils—and remained there for years to come.

Strangely enough, this instance of almost pathetic hunger for public acclaim was passed off in Denver with only a few hoots from the *News* and smiling headshakes on street corners. The city had become fairly well inured to such seizures, although there were times when indignation boiled over.

One of these occasions came at a meeting of the Jane Jefferson Club in the Brown Palace at which sentiments were being whipped up for a primary election campaign in August 1932. The retiring state chairman of the Democratic party, editor Walter Walker of the *Grand Junction Sentinel*, took the opportunity to purge himself of certain strong feelings about Bonfils.

A reporter for the *News*, Maurice Leckenby, asked for a text of the remarks and he was given one, though doubt was expressed that the

paper would dare publish them. But a full accounting of Walker's speech appeared in print next morning. Bonfils immediately sued the *News* for libel, alleging injuries which would require two hundred thousand dollars to heal.

Preliminary sparring was by deposition, and Philip Van Cise, attorney for the *News*, finally won the legal right to question Bonfils before a notary public. Bonfils answered a few questions and then clamped his jaw shut. The line of Van Cise's inquiry indicated that the entire Bonfils biography, from Oklahoma land manipulations to lotteries to Teapot Dome, was to become a matter of public record. Bon clapped his derby on his head and departed in a tower of rage.

Van Cise countered with a motion to district court that Bonfils be cited for contempt for failing to answer the questions. The *News'* motion said that counsel Van Cise was prepared to prove, by Bonfils himself, the truth of forty-one points of justification for Walter Walker's remarks.

The judge ruled that Bonfils would have to appear in January 1933 to answer such questions as the keen Van Cise cared to propound.

Bonfils was spared this further invasion of his private history, and the libel suit never came to trial. One afternoon late in January he went home early from the Red Room with a cold. The infection spread and a middle-ear operation was performed, but a week later, early on the morning of February 2, Bonfils died of encephalitis at the age of seventy-two. It was the end of an era for the American press. The last of the giants of personal journalism was gone.

As dawn spread over the Mile-High City he had considered his fief by Divine Providence, Bonfils did not have to witness a final indignity. The *News* beat his paper to the streets with word of his death. By twenty minutes, in a contest of extras. A tip that Bon was dying had come to Joe McMeel, then managing editor for the *News*. Reporters Gene Cervi and Harry Walker were dispatched to the Bonfils mansion on East Tenth Avenue abutting Cheesman Park to mount a nightlong vigil. They watched oxygen tanks from Children's Hospital being carried in, and saw the Rev. Hugh L. McMenamin, rector of the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception, come and go. In his last hours Bonfils had called for a priest and been baptized in the Catholic Church.

The eastern sky began to pale, and lights went on in the mansion. A cab drew up, and Volney Hoggatt, Bon's long-time bodyguard and companion, got out. Cervi and Walker cornered the cabby, who said Hoggatt had told him, "Bonfils is dead." The word was phoned to the *News*, where the story had been in preparation all night, Wally Reef writing. Confirmation was needed. *Post* staff members, routed from their beds, denied the report. So *News* reporters got on the telephones, calling every mortuary in town, posing as members of the Bonfils household and demanding to know when a car would be sent. Finally one mortuary protested that its car already was on the way. It was enough. Max Greedy

wrote the headlines and the presses rolled. The *News* had its scoop.

It was big news, of course, that death was prouder and stronger than the seemingly invincible Bonfils, and considering the day and the circumstances, extras were fully justified, though, again, it is extremely doubtful that very many startled citizens bothered to notice who scooped whom by twenty minutes. The solemn and sweaty rites of the news beat had been observed with formal diligence that morning on Welton and Champa streets, but Bonfils would have understood. His paper, he often asserted, was "first in everything," and he had caused that it should be emblazoned in the masthead that the *Post* was "The Best Newspaper in the U.S.A."

Later in the day of February 2 the *Post's* regular editions came out with every column rule on page one turned, creating so many black borders and margins that a casual visitor might have wondered if the press had broken down. The entire front page, save only for the weather forecast and Arthur Brisbane's column, was required to do justice to the passing. Inside, the obituary, photos, and messages of grief and appraisal spread over five pages.

Herbert Hoover sent condolences. Jack Dempsey attended the funeral along with merchants and politicians, many of whom at one time or another had felt the lash of Bonfils' power.

Bonfils left twenty million dollars, a gold-headed cane which subsequently was found to conceal a gun, and a wealth of legend which Denver cherishes and keeps alive with retellings and embroideries. Perhaps there's something of a subconscious community masochism in this. As Lee Casey commented in reviewing Fowler's *Timber Line*, if the reign of F. G. Bonfils was a scandal and harmful, the fault lay primarily with the town that submitted to it.⁸ And certainly the *News* had done everything it could to foment rebellion.

As time rolled on from 1928, however, the *News* spoke with less and less vigor and to fewer and fewer listeners. Circulation dropped, and advertising revenues followed the dismal curve downward. The tally of subscribers dwindled to a corporal's guard of deep-rooted old-timers who respected the paper's ancient lineage, of irreconcilables who hated the *Post*, and of "best people," principally resident on Capitol and Park hills, who could afford two daily newspapers even during a depression. Much of Denver's wealth always has been concentrated east and south of midtown. In the eighties and nineties some of the mining kings and merchant princes chose the bluff west of the Platte for their ornate Victorian mansions, a few of which still stand, centered around the old town of Highland that William Byers had helped lay out. The Platte bottoms, however, filled up with railroad yards and an industrial and slum section. Viaducts were built to carry streetcars and auto traffic over

⁸*Rocky Mountain News*, Oct. 31, 1933.

the district, but analysts of Denver real estate say the eyesore area forced building of the more affluent neighborhoods to the south and east. The sharp growth of recent years has scrambled this economic geography somewhat, but in the thirties the people who worried about stock market values rather than the price of bread lived up the hill to the east or south along and beyond Cherry Creek, and it was in these areas that *News* carriers delivered most of their papers. The "quality" circulation was one of the few talking points available to Grosse Smith, E. A. Murphy, Parkhill Harvey, Con Hecker, and the other *News* advertising salesmen. They managed to get the message through to just enough merchants to keep the paper from looking like a Sunday school leaflet. Even so there were days when it wasted to as few as twelve yawning pages almost innocent of commercial pleadings. This, of course, compounded misery in geometrical progression, since research has shown that many patrons, particularly women, buy a newspaper as much for its advertising as for its red-hot exclusive news beats.

Circulation dropped from the high-water mark of 110,000 to a low of 33,400. During the three months ended June 30, 1928, the *Rocky Mountain News* and the *Evening News* circulated to a total of 92,587 patrons, and the Sunday paper to 105,675. By September 30, 1934, when bottom was touched, the daily average was down to 33,421, and the Sunday circulation hit its low point of 41,920 a year earlier. Meanwhile advertising lineage was skidding from 8,151,851 lines in 1928 to 3,785,309 in 1940. Ribs were showing on a gaunt, much-subdued Wildcat of Welton Street.

Still the *News* clung on, backpedaling like a groggy prize fighter with more courage than punch power. Bob Boyd, who had majored at half-back on the University of Denver football team, took over from Dave Stein in April 1931 as circulation manager and fought a dogged retreat for every withdrawing subscriber. Upstairs in the city room a minimal editorial staff which adversity taught to be quick on its feet was turning out a quietly competent product without frills. Flamboyance was out the window. Conservatism in methods and make-up approached Kansas City *Star* levels. The loyal little staff gave a good account of itself against mounting odds, but its victories went largely unnoticed and an air of hand-to-mouth existence dampened any inclination of morale to soar. Down in the gloomy basement the presses, prematurely aged by the pounding they took during the Battle of the Century, were held together with baling wire, mucilage, and the improvising genius of a soft-spoken machinist named Charlie Larsen.

All in all the configuration of dark omens was such as to sour milk in the pasture. The stars were out of orbit, and buzzards circled overhead for fifteen long years. Somebody wasn't holding his mouth right. Everything that possibly could go awry did. Anything that under even improbable and hostile conditions would have been a roaring success

wasn't. The *News* had scarcely regrouped its dwindling forces to withstand siege when the roof caved in on American prosperity.

Repercussions of the October 1929 stock market crash did not reach Denver immediately. In fact *News* ad lineage took a half-million hop upward in 1929, reaching the highest point it would achieve in the next nineteen years. Neither 1930 nor 1931 was badly off, but in 1932 the long decline began. National economic reversals are usually slow in coming to Denver. It is not primarily a manufacturing town, and it is far from being a one-industry city like some steel, auto, and textile centers. The widely diversified economy is based principally on distribution, processing, and service industries. Fluctuations, both up and down, are less likely to be sharp ones. The 1958 recession, for example, did not have much over-all effect on Denver. *News* advertising revenues showed steady gains to new record-breaking levels. A similar stability was displayed, at first, as the nation plunged into the Dirty Thirties.

By 1932 and 1933, however, Denver had joined the rest of the country in the slough. There were soup kitchens on Larimer Street, and doleful men in ragged GI overcoats from World War I dragged dispiritedly up Seventeenth Street to haunt the entrances to the Brown Palace in hope of handouts. The railroad yards filled up with hungry wanderers, shuffling about the country in chase of rumors of work. Emily Griffith's Opportunity School began to teach classes in gold panning, an art which had all but disappeared. Hundreds of the unemployed daily climbed down into the concrete-walled bed of Cherry Creek to wash sands which had been almost undisturbed since the Pike's Peak gold rush. Some of them took out two and three dollars a day in dust and trudged up West Colfax Avenue to deposit it at the mint.

Bishop Frank Rice of the Liberal Church Inc., the skid-row divine who laid the ghost of cannibal Packer, set up a center for relief services at his bare little meetinghouse in a vacant store on the alley off Larimer Street. The bishop concerned himself primarily with the "undeserving poor." There were, he argued, numerous high-minded moral and Christian philanthropists affiliated with the uptown churches who were willing to contribute to the welfare of the deserving poor. He would take care of the other kind. Besides, he didn't insist on gratitude. At the Liberal Church hungry men were fed first and then had hymns sung to them. Other missions operated on a sterner system of ethics. Their soup was poured *after* prayers, frequently long-winded.

Bishop Rice's tactics in gathering alms to support his work occasionally approached strong-arm methods. He not only did not hesitate to put the bite on the town's leading clubmen and business princes, but he made a practice of calling on them regularly and frequently to remind them of their brotherhood with his congregation of bums, down-and-outers, winos, and ne'er-do-wells. Thus it came to pass that Rice paid a call at the carpeted offices of Gerald Hughes, first-magnitude banker and

lawyer, in the International Trust Building. It was the second time in two days that Hughes had been subjected to ecclesiastical audience. He had come through the day before, and now he demurred to an additional tithe. The mendicant was escorted firmly to the door.

In the corridor Bishop Rice went down on his knees and began to pray, in a voice that carried through every partition in the building, for the redemption of the banker's immortal soul. The intercession ran something in this vein:

Oh, Lord, in Thy infinite compassion, look down with mercy and forgiveness on Thy sinner Gerald Hughes! He is a good man, but he sometimes forgets. He will go home tonight to dine on roast squab under glass. Let not this luxury harden his heart to the plight of his brothers, starving tonight in the streets of Denver. We ask Thee to guide the footsteps of Thy sinner Gerald Hughes through the many perils of wealth and high living. He means well, but the temptations are many. . . .

Hughes stepped out and thrust a ten-dollar bill into the clasped hands of the kneeling supplicant. Rice opened one eye to take note of the denomination, then turned his enraptured face upward.

"Amen!" he shouted. "Thank you, Lord, for so promptly coming to the rescue of Thy sinner."

Rice shared in full the poverty of his parishioners. He ate the same food he served to them, and when there was nothing on hand to boil into soup he, too, went hungry. His clothes were ragged, his reversed collar soiled. He slept on a pallet in one corner of his mission. There was never any question that the gifts he wheedled or extorted went where they were supposed to go.

The specialty of the Liberal Church was the succoring of unfortunates everyone else had abandoned. When a Colorado boy was convicted of a particularly revolting and violent murder in California, Bishop Rice sought to go to the wretched youth's comfort. He put on a robe of sackcloth and appeared at Union Station clutching a brown paper bag filled with wood ashes. Then he climbed aboard a Colorado & Southern train, strewed the ashes over the white sheets of his Pullman berth, bedded himself, and tuned up in a wail of lamentations. The conductor threw him off the train at Pueblo. Rice sued for, and recovered, damages to his episcopal dignity—and spent the money on a round of turkey dinners at his mission.

Rice was a frequent visitor to the editorial rooms of the *News*, partly because Lee Casey was such a soft touch and partly because he had an acute appreciation of the values of publicity. He returned thanks for donations and editorial mention by distributing red hats and other church honors, along with more mundane gratuities. John Polly in his column, "The Reporter Who Gets Around," gave out with a particularly

fine notice, and Rice told him: "The Lord will repay you for what you've done, and I hope to buy you a drink." One day Rice appeared in the office and formally invested Lee Casey as a "Major Prophet" of the Liberal Church. Later Bob Chase was created a cardinal, and Mary Coyle was officially decreed to be an "angel." Several bishoprics were established, although in one case there was a conflict in diocesan boundaries. When "Young Jack" Foster left Denver for New York and a promotion on the staff of the *Telegram*, Rice designated him Bishop of Broadway, obviously an evangelical assignment. Possibly he forgot that earlier he had installed Jack Howard as a cardinal and Bishop of All Journalism.

The desperation and want against which Bishop Rice, among others, struggled were by no means exclusively urban specters. The happy farmer had ceased to whistle behind his plow. While President-elect Franklin Roosevelt laid plans for Muscle Shoals and the Tennessee Valley experiment at remaking the good but recalcitrant earth, sons of the soil in Colorado were in open revolt against the moneylenders. Rebellion flared in the northeastern corner of the state at Julesburg, whence the early *News* had sent its pony express to pick up word of Lincoln's election. Five hundred bitter farmers gathered at the farm of George A. Jones, a mile north of town, and heard how he had lost his two hundred and forty acres to the bankers. He had deeded his farm to his creditors in order to be allowed to remain on it with a lease. Then his three thousand dollars worth of machinery had been repossessed. Wiped out. Farm gone, and now even the tools of a humble tenant. The assembled farmers listened to the story, marched to town in a growling mob, seized the entire lot of machinery, and returned it to the Jones place.⁹ Elsewhere symbolic nooses dangled from barn doors to discourage outside bidders at foreclosure auctions. Neighbors rallied to the sales, bid in the foreclosed property at Woolworth prices—two cents for a horse, five cents for a binder—returned it all to the original owner, and stomped off home again.

In this sort of a topsy-turvy world the *News* was struggling to regain its poise. The odds ran long against success.

A series of editors and business managers bucked the hoodoo. Several of these men later became, in other cities, top-ranking newspaper executives with reputations for the golden touch. In Denver each failed to find a success formula. The touch was uniformly and dismally leaden. Highly competent men with enviable records for sober judgment, diligence, and profit making were placed in command of the *News*. A few held their own, some rocked the boat. Minor successes were scored, only to be wiped out by new reversals. Gray-haired experience was tried, and aggressive youth. Neither jelled. Most of the editors played it close and sought to balance the books by bare living and rigid economies. A couple

⁹*Rocky Mountain News*, Feb. 3, 1933.

spent expansively. Others tried the middle course. All three routes led only to dead ends.

The *News*, improbably, lived through both its friends and its foes.

Whatever it is that gives a newspaper endurance, the *News* had it. Probably part of the explanation lies in the quiet continuity provided by a few hard-bitten craftsmen, practical, competent realists like Bob Chase, Max Greedy, and a handful of others, who stayed at their desks and got out a paper while the town tittered over executive shenanigans and sharp operators tried to walk off with the roof over their heads. Lee Casey surely was a factor of survival. His column quickly established itself, and for many years it was the most popular single feature in either Denver newspaper. There were readers who bought the *News* only for Casey's wise, tolerant, kindly, but always provocative comments. Casey seldom thundered, and he was bookish at a time when books were widely regarded as the quaint toys of professors and hardly a diet for red-blooded, money-making go-getters. Some of the causes Casey gently advocated never seemed to catch fire, but the effect was cumulative. For the most part the men who were Casey's bosses have been almost forgotten in Denver. Casey, who flaunted every rule of "popularity" by nosing around publicly in Gibbon and Virgil, is remembered, and it is he, not they, who supplies the illustrative quotes for a number of principles outlined in a standard textbook on editorial writing.

Why rehash history? Casey once asked himself in print, writing about War I while War II was hot. For a very good reason, he answered. It sometimes shows that we can learn from experience.

Colorado generally and Denver especially threw reason overboard. Public officials engaged in what seemed to be a contest of hysteria. . . . The Denver school system was the first in the country to outlaw the instruction in German language or literature, and the University of Colorado was a close second. (Today, as an essential part of the war effort, Japanese language courses have been established at Boulder and classes in German continue.) . . . Denver, not by official pronouncement but by common impulse, changed sauerkraut to liberty cabbage and hamburger to liberty steak. . . . Two full years after the armistice, stay-at-home super-patriots demanded and got the cancellation of a concert by Fritz Kreisler solely because Mr. Kreisler had served in the Austrian army. . . .¹⁰

Casey certainly, but perhaps also the sense of historical perspective which he voiced and the paper itself represented, gave the *News* substance and staying power through the days when dissolution and collapse seemed more in the cards. The *News* did not slight its long memory when the War Relocation Authority began to move Japanese-American

¹⁰*Rocky Mountain News*, Mar. 29, 1944; quoted by A. Gayle Waldrop, *Editor and Editorial Writer* (New York, 1948 and 1955), pp. 187-88.

families from the west coast to concentration camps at Granada, Colorado, and Heart Mountain, Wyoming. The *Post* wrapped itself in the flag and climbed on a jingo charger. "A Jap Is a Jap," it snarled, and Governor Ralph L. Carr was blistered for permitting a WRA camp to be located on patriotic Colorado soil. The *News* sent its editor and reporters to Granada and Heart Mountain for a calm appraisal of the threat. They found the camps neat, clean, and orderly, the Nisei loyal and well behaved. The whole relocation project was a shameful broadcast slur on a defenseless minority, the *News* asserted, and talk of threats to Rocky Mountain security was utter hogwash. The articles and editorials strengthened Governor Carr's position, and the subsequent spotless record of the two camps vindicated the paper's judgment. But it was not a popular stand for the *News* to take; Denver's Post No. 1 of the American Legion, one of the country's largest, was loving the sounds that issued from Champa Street. It would have been much more politic for the *News* to remain silent and remember Pearl Harbor.

The *News'* attitude on WRA was no way to win a popularity contest. But possibly it reflected the character which both was shaped by and sustained the paper through its long winter.

The stripping down to lean, flat-bellied essentials began soon after the firing ceased in 1928. It was not, of course, a voluntary matter. Fat men and plump institutions, it is observable, seldom slough off their chubbinesses with any great degree of ease or enthusiasm. For the *News*, the cost in humbled pride was dear. There was the matter of the sepia-colored Sunday rotogravure section, for example. It had been a proud day when the section was added, the first of its kind in all the West. It had proved so popular in those days of the infancy of photo journalism that the *Post* was forced to copy the feature. Now, in 1930, the section was too expensive a luxury, and it was dropped. The fact that the *Post* continued *its* section for many years didn't help a bit.

There were shiftings and shufflings as the staff shook down to subsistence levels. Eddie Day left the managing editorship and went to the *Post* to fill the same slot. Joe McMeel, one of his successors, also moved down to Champa Street. "Young Jack" Foster, ambition aflame, invaded New York. John P. Lewis was another pilgrim who turned his face eastward to become, in 1936, editor of *PM* in New York. As the depression deepened and retrenchment followed retrenchment, Clyde Brion Davis departed to join Ray Colvin on the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, later hopped across the country to the *Buffalo Times*, then a member of the Scripps-Howard family, and finally left the newspaper business to become a full-time novelist in Connecticut. Bill Beardshear, Walden Sweet, and Gene Cervi switched to the *Post*, Mary Coyle Chase abandoned journalism for motherhood. Radio "newscasting" beckoned to Wally Reef. Harvey Sethman became the executive secretary of the Colorado State Medical Society. When "Curly" Grieve went to the San Francisco *Examiner*

gravel-voiced Jack Carberry took over as sports editor, but he, too, succumbed to the lures of the *Post* and left Ham Beresford and N. C. ("Tub") Morris to fill the gap while Chet Nelson was working up to become chief sport in June 1934. Loudon Kelly went to the Denver bureau of the Associated Press and stayed. The *Post* hired state editor Tom Walker as financial editor. His son Harry remained with the *News* and eventually also took over coverage of business and market news. For a time the Denver financial pages were a father-son duel.

Some went, some came, and a few held fast. Among the newcomers were Tommy Hinman, Ben Blumberg, and Warren B. Lowe, now business editor after a term as city editor. The depression made the writing of magazine fiction a perilous pastime, and Forbes Parkhill came back to ride the rim of the copy desk for a spell at thirty-five dollars a week. Dick Henry covered City Hall (1935-1941) and became so attached to the place that he married the City Council secretary. Up on Capitol Hill, pint-sized Barron B. Beshoar was covering the Statehouse run in the footsteps of Lee Casey and Bob Chase. Later Beshoar held executive posts with *Time-Life* in Denver, New York, Los Angeles, and now back in Denver again. The stalwarts of the era also included John Polly, Alberta Pike, George Burns, and "Spider" Leckenby. Bob Chase and Max Greedy each did turns on the city desk, Chase for several go-rounds before moving up to managing editor and associate editor. "Duke" Ledford and Ken Bundy joined Harry Rhoads in the darkroom, as did both of Harry's daughters, Mitzi and Harriet. Anne New was society editor. Eve Bennett, now a writer of popular children's books, handled sob-sister assignments and club news. Leonard Cahn moved against the stream and switched from the *Post* to the *News* sports staff. Toward the latter stages of the bleak season Clair Jordan, Ed Oschmann, and Pasquale Marranzino broke in as cubs. Jordan hatched out as a sports writer, Oschmann took over from Dick Henry at City Hall, and Marranzino today is Denver's most avidly read local columnist.

The succession of editors began with Edward T. Leech, who was called back home to Denver from Birmingham as field marshal in the war with the *Post*, Leech became editor of both the morning and evening *News* in January 1927. He was born in Denver June 17, 1892, and as a boy was a carrier for the *Times*. After two years at the University of Colorado he joined the staff of the *Republican* at a wage of eight dollars weekly. He switched to the Scripps-McRae *Express* in 1913 and three years later, at the age of twenty-three, he was its editor. He went to the *Memphis Press* in March 1917 as managing editor. A year later, and not yet twenty-seven, he was appointed editor of the *Press*. Within a few months he was in a rough-and-tumble fight with the Crump machine and for ten days wrote his editorials from behind the bars of Shelby County jail while serving a sentence for contempt of court. He was escorted to jail by a brass band and a parade of anti-Crump dignitaries.

The band serenaded the prisoners with "The Memphis Blues." When Leech got out there was a mass indignation meeting in Court Square, and the fiery young editor was toasted at a victory dinner in the Tennessee Club. In 1924, Bob Scripps and Roy Howard founded the *Birmingham Post* and tapped Leech for the editorship. He made jail in Birmingham too; a judge decided his editorial comments on the Ku Klux Klan offended the flower of Southern manhood. Leech always said he liked the Memphis jail better.

Back in Denver he took lumps of another kind through two wild years of newspaper war and three years of the armed truce and retrenchment that followed. He was transferred in 1931 to the editorship of the *Pittsburgh Press*, purchased by Scripps-Howard in 1923. He remained in charge of the *Press* until his death and built a notable career and a national reputation on a record of outstanding community service. When he died, December 11, 1949, Leech was the senior editor of the Scripps-Howard organization.¹¹

Early in his incumbency at the *News*, Leech hired a young reporter named Charles E. Lounsbury to serve as promotion editor under the tutelage of Max Cook. Lounsbury had been a *News-Times* police reporter from 1919 to 1921, then had gone to the *Post*. His father, George F. Lounsbury, also had been a Denver newspaperman and later became chief editorial writer for the Milwaukee *Sentinel*. When Cook suggested to him that he come back to the *News* the ambitious young Lounsbury wanted to know if Scripps-Howard philosophy permitted a promotion editor to become managing editor and top editor. "I told him it sure did," Cook recalls. "Inside of five years, Chuck made both jobs."

Lounsbury was appointed editor in 1931 when Leech left for Pittsburgh. As promotion editor he had stormed up many of the capers and giveaways during the hostilities. Then he became city editor and, when Eddie Day departed, succeeded him as managing editor. Lounsbury, too, was a Denver native. He was born April 5, 1898, and, like Leech, was an alumnus of West Denver High School. He attended Colorado College. His early career as a police reporter was not hampered by the fact that he was a nephew of Deputy Police Chief H. Rugg Williams. But neither his journalistic parentage nor his connections with the police force equipped him with solutions to the woes of the *News*, now sunk deep in the depression. He was given a leave of absence in 1935 and the following year left Denver to become managing editor of the Des Moines *Register-Tribune* Syndicate, a position he held at his death on November 2, 1952.¹²

¹¹Sorrells, op. cit., pp. 289-92; *Scripps-Howard News*, Vol. 1, No. 2 (Jan. 1927); *Rocky Mountain News*, Dec. 12, 1949; *What Next?* (undated, unsigned pamphlet, Memphis, 1918?).

¹²*Rocky Mountain News*, Nov. 3, 1952; *Denver Post*, Nov. 3, 1952.

Before Lounsbury left for the greener fields of the corn belt Charles B. McCabe arrived in town by the 1935 equivalent of jet propulsion. McCabe was a ball of fire, and for a brief regency gave the city an old-style hotfoot. He had been burning up the Middle West as a salesman for the United Press service, and great things were expected of him when he was sent to Denver in March and given the title of publisher of the *News*, the only time that title was bestowed. McCabe remembers that shortly after his arrival some of his new friends enticed him into a poker game with William C. Shepherd, who took over as editor of the *Post* following Bonfils' death, without revealing to him the identity of the monosyllabic, cigar-chewing Shep. "I lost substantially," McCabe writes, "and Bill won about what I lost. The next day it was all over Denver that the new publisher of the *Rocky Mountain News* 'came, saw and was conquered' by Shep."

Nonetheless McCabe built fires. He also chased them. The new publisher left a standing order with Sam Nadler to hurry around with a circulation truck whenever a fire alarm sounded. Sometimes he was on the scene before his own police reporters, who enjoyed no such taxi service. McCabe's editorial methods were in that hairbreadth vein, and they were also lavish in a style which quickly won him the local nickname of "Champagne Charlie." One of his stunts was to sponsor the appearance of an evangelist in City Auditorium. McCabe himself wrote the headline: "5000 Hear Word of God." He lost twenty pounds in his first three months on Welton Street but added substantially to circulation figures with whoop-te-do promotions reminiscent of the previous decade. In the midst of it all he found time to go fishing before coming to the office in the mornings. He recalls:

When I told Lee Casey that I was catching trout up Bear Creek Cañon, he had his doubts. It appears that Bear Creek had been fished out fifty years before!

In any event, I was invited to take part in a fishing contest which included some of the fellows at the office. We were dropped off at various points on the stream and were to fish our allocated number of pools and then check to see who had done the best. When I completed my stretch of water the other contestants, who hadn't bothered to fish at all and were laughing up their sleeves at me, were waiting. I had actually caught a half-dozen trout. What Lee and the boys did not realize was that a cloudburst had permitted fish to escape from a hatchery or other storage area into Bear Creek.

As one of his efforts McCabe even changed the name of the paper—briefly. He made it the *Denver News*. The protests came flooding in immediately. The aging "Sage of the Rockies," Chauncey Thomas, spoke for those who complained of sacrilege:

So you have changed the name of The Rocky Mountain News that my family founded—the oldest and most illustrious business name in the state. Is “Pikes Peak” next under the guillotine you have erected for our Western nomenclature? I was spanked in The Rocky Mountain News editor’s office 60 years ago for piing type. My first writing was in The Rocky Mountain News—1886. That is just 49 years ago. And now it is the “Denver News.” What will the Rockies do for a newspaper? I also preferred the Larimer st. skyline, seen on page one every morning for a half-century. Denver is not Colorado, much less the Rocky Mountains. Your move reminds me of the attempt to change the name of the Tabor Grand Opera House a few years back.

“So fleet the works of man back to the earth again

“Ancient and holy things fade like a dream!”

“Tabor” and “Rocky Mountain News” alike.¹⁸

McCabe retreated hastily and restored the full name. The familiar masthead Thomas respected—a drawing of the city’s sky line beneath an arch of the words “Rocky Mountain”—came back a little later, only to be dropped again. In 1941 a new sky line was placed behind the name, and the style has been continued since.

The McCabe conflagration lasted ten months, until December 1935. The eye of Hearst had been attracted to the billows of smoke and flame on the Western horizon, and he summoned McCabe to New York as publisher of the *Mirror*. The salary lure reportedly ran to six digits, and McCabe justified it by pushing *Mirror* circulation to seven. Both he and the Hearst organization apparently were satisfied with the arrangement; McCabe today is still publisher of the Manhattan paper. He took with him to New York his Denver city editor, Glenn Neville, who had joined the *News* staff as a reporter in 1927. Neville has been executive editor of the *Mirror* since 1943.

One slant on McCabe and his regime at the *News* has come from Gene Cervi, who viewed them from Champa Street. Cervi describes McCabe as “a fascinating rocket in American journalistic skies.”

. . . Swaggering, adventurous, friendly and thoroly delightful in a shocking sort of way, the Denver-trained McCabe achieved his own idea of heaven on earth this month when his nasty-minded New York *Mirror*, one of the worst daily newspapers in the world, succeeded in gathering the largest crowd in history (two and a half million people, he said) on the beach at Coney Island to see Charlie shoot off—not ideas—but fireworks on July 3.

McCabe, tall and handsome in his tanned hawk face, was one of the most sparkling and unpredictable newspapermen ever turned out in the local Scripps-Howard mill. After running Roy Howard around \$100,000 in the red to mock up an artificial 23 per cent gain in Rocky Mountain News circulation, he whirl-winded out of here and into New

¹⁸*Rocky Mountain News*, Mar. 25, 1935.

York to take over Hearst's dirty, run-down sheet 10 years ago. He took the wheezing and limp rag from 250,000 anemic circulation daily and shot it up past the million mark, making a terrific name for himself and lots of profit for Hearst. He also pushed the *Mirror* to more than 2,200,000 circulation on Sunday, which is an otherwise holy day. . . .¹⁴

And so Charlie McCabe, too, had caught an eastbound flyer from Denver. Next!

Next came Forrest Davis, who sported a Charlie Chan mustache and beard and was preceded to Denver by a high-powered reputation. He had edited the Evansville, Indiana, *Journal*, written several books, been a Washington and foreign correspondent for the *Detroit Free Press*, covered the Scopes monkey trial for the *New York Herald Tribune*. Then he had gone to the *World-Telegram* and of late had been a general correspondent for the Scripps-Howard newspapers. Davis took over the editorship of the *News* in July 1936 and appointed Larry L. Sisk as his managing editor. Thereafter he was seldom in the office. He was by every instinct a leg man, a reporter, a writer. McCabe rated reporters a dime a dozen; in his book desk men made the newspaper. Davis held diametrically opposing views. Reporters were everything, and who were these people who sat around the city room all day and never seemed to do anything productive? Copyreaders of the Davis era say he never seemed to grasp the process by which a story became a portion of a printed newspaper. Reporters and columnists have more charitable memories of him.

With his beard and his egghead reputation, Davis lent the *News* a certain flair, and he was in lively demand as a luncheon speaker. One of his major contributions to practical newspaper management in Denver was to re-establish the gimmick of giving the paper away once each week as a come-on sampling of the populace and in order to guarantee advertisers a minimum circulation. Advertisers were scarce, and things were tough all over. Davis also lasted less than a year. Early in the spring of 1937 he packed his bags. Subsequently he became associate and Washington editor of the *Saturday Evening Post*, co-editor of the extreme right-wing fortnightly, *The Freeman* (in 1932 he had found the profit motive "unnecessary" and somewhat scandalous in his book, *What Price Wall Street?*), and today he is Washington correspondent for the Cincinnati *Enquirer*.¹⁵

Managing editor Larry Sisk hung around for an even shorter period than his boss. To succeed him, Davis brought in from New York an up-and-coming young man who had been confidential secretary to W. W. Hawkins, board chairman of the E. W. Scripps Company, and later had edited the *Scripps-Howard News*, house organ for the chain.

¹⁴*Cervi News Service*, July 24, 1947.

¹⁵*New York World-Telegram*, May 27, 1932; Drewry, op. cit., pp. 2-4.

When Davis left, Aubrey Graves took over as editor in April 1937. A dapper man with a thin mustache, Graves was energetic, determined, and eager to lift the *News* from its pit. But he could find no handles for lifting, and his tenure was brief. He was out by September. Graves also went east and today is Sunday editor of the *Washington Post*, owns a ninety-acre farm across the river in Virginia, and strengthens himself against any memories of Rocky Mountain journalism by rearing Tennessee walking horses. During his short occupancy of the front office Graves installed Eugene Fisher as managing editor. Fisher, a onetime tackle for the University of Missouri, was big and handsome, and also tough and competent. Nothing in the city or the city room escaped his eye. He is remembered for his bull-like voice and a nervous habit of slapping his desk with an eighteen-inch steel printer's ruler while deep in thought. The pounding startled everyone else, but Gene found it conducive to thinking. Fisher departed with a characteristic brusqueness. One morning about one-thirty he put on his coat and hat, strode to the swinging doors, roared out, "Don't forget to check the jumps," and left. There had been an epidemic of error in getting "jumps"—the portions of stories continued from page one to inside pages—in the spot where the page-one continued lines said they would be found. Fisher issued his final order and was gone; the *News* was becoming a graveyard of newspaper reputations.

During the Graves regime the Denver branch of Heywood Broun's heretical union for newspapermen signed its first contract in Colorado with the *News*. The agreement was reached June 24, 1937, and signed by Graves and George V. Burns, union president, then on the *News* copy desk. It became effective July 12 and provided for a five-day, forty-hour work week and a pay scale which began at fifteen dollars for copy boys and went to twenty for beginning reporters, who got forty dollars after three years of experience.

The Denver Newspaper Guild was organized more than a year earlier. George Burns had laid out a dollar for a room in the Adams Hotel at Eighteenth and Welton streets, and interested newsmen on both the *News* and *Post* were invited to drop around for a meeting. Those who attended from the Welton Street shop were: Burns, Richard Henry, Don Montgomery, Chester Nelson, Pat Burgess, Glenn T. Neville, John Polly, Robert Chase, Alberta Pike, Warren B. Lowe, Francis M. Plumb, Eddie Grant, Maxwell G. Greedy, and Barron B. Beshoar. The only *Post* staff member who showed up was Vincent M. Dwyer, today managing editor of the *News* but then a police reporter on Champa Street. A few weeks later Burns was elected president, Chase and Plumb vice-presidents, Beshoar secretary, and Greedy treasurer. A letter was written to the editor, Charlie Lounsbury, informing him of the organization, and then everyone concerned pulled in his neck and waited for lightning to strike.

"We were all proud of ourselves and positive that we had to organize," Chase recalls, "but we were scared. We didn't know if we would have jobs after that letter was received."

No one was fired, however, and as time passed the guild won a wider and wider membership. Contracts have been signed annually or biennially between the guild and the *News* since 1937, and there has never been a guild strike in Denver.¹⁶

Early in September 1937, about the time the radical forty-hour week went into effect, Walter Morrow was appointed not only editor of the *News* but also editor in chief of the Southwest group of Scripps-Howard newspapers, thereby reviving briefly an earlier practice of regional supervision in the organization.¹⁷ In addition to the *News*, the Southwest group included the *Oklahoma News* in Oklahoma City, the *Fort Worth Press*, *Houston Press*, *El Paso Herald-Post*, and *Albuquerque Tribune*. Morrow was to make his headquarters in Denver, bail out the *News*, and also keep his eye on the less troublesome colts in his string.

At forty-three, Walt Morrow had earned a high regard for smooth, effective newspaper management. He came to Denver from six successful years as editor of the *Akron Times-Press*, and he had also served in executive capacities on papers in Memphis, Pittsburgh, Buffalo, East Lansing, Cleveland, and New York. He was born March 25, 1894, in Crawfordsville, Indiana, attended the University of Oklahoma, and got his start on journals in the former Indian Territory. He broke in on the staff of the *Daily Oklahoman* in Oklahoma City. Later he was editor of the *McAlester News*, *Okmulgee Times*, and *Ponca City News*.

Surely with this wealth of experience he would be able to lead the *Rocky Mountain News* out of the darkness. Alas. Skills which were equal to all crises in a dozen other cities met their match in Denver.

Morrow was a working editor: shirt open at the collar, tie askew, suit rumpled and liberally sprinkled with ashes. A portly man, he puffed and gasped around an ever present cigarette as he grappled personally with every phase of the *News* operation. He was an expansive operator, and he tried spending and sprucing up as answers to the paper's chronic debility. A local Sunday magazine section was started, sparkling with literary pages which offered cash prizes for the encouragement of home-grown poets. Morrow brought in Adolph ("Bud") Sypher from Ohio as his city editor. Sypher was the sardonic type, like in the movies. He shunted men who knew the town into sidetrack spots where they could do the least good, and his notion of local news coverage was to dispatch

¹⁶*Rocky Mountain News*, June 25 and Sept. 9, 1937; *Brief History of the Denver Newspaper Guild* (Denver, 1955); Bill Miller, "The Denver Guild and How it Started," *Byline*, Vol. 1, No. 4 (Nov. 1957), pp. 12ff.

¹⁷*Rocky Mountain News*, Sept. 7, 1937.

a reporter to interview a woman who had given birth in the streets on "how it felt."

Neither Morrow's experience nor the dollars he spent accomplished any noticeable upturn. He moved on late in 1938, became editor of the *Columbus Citizen* in 1942, and president of the American Retail Federation in 1945. He died July 14, 1949, in Phoenix, Arizona.

Lee Casey, then for some years associate editor, took over from Morrow as acting editor and hated every minute of it. The many practical, routine details bored him, the budget making, the dull reports to be written, the endless stream of callers, each with his hand out for some special service or favor. Lee complained bitterly of having to cope with recurrent mechanical problems in the composing room, and his soft heart made it torture to fire an employee. He cheerfully admitted that he was not cut from executive cloth. He'd much rather be reading Gibbon or Anatole France and writing about historical parallels between the Peloponnesian War and modern times.

Seven editors in eleven years, and not one of them a physician with a cure for the *News'* multiple ailments.

The dreary years were not entirely without their light moments of course. Editor Lounsbury was driven to sputtering apoplexy one afternoon during the pre-Christmas season when he received a telephone call from a lady who identified herself as the mother superior of Queen of Heaven Orphanage. Readers of the *News* had contributed several baskets of dolls as a gesture toward brightening the season for the orphan girls, and the gifts had been delivered earlier in the day. The good sister wanted to thank the paper for its part in the kind act, but, she went on, how did it happen that the dolls were uniformly without panties? Shameful. What was the *News* trying to do, destroy the morals of her young charges?

"But, Sister . . ." Lounsbury pleaded.

"I think you're a lecherous old man," the voice said, and there was a click on the wire.

Lounsbury emerged from his private office, ruefully contemplating the many and varied hazards of an editor and abusing the fates which made him a newspaperman instead of a ribbon clerk. Then he saw one of his female reporters come laughing from the city-room phone booth with the "outside" line. He canned the joker on the spot.

The same girl earlier had given Eddie Day a bad time over Goodfellow apples. The *News* Goodfellows Club was a Yuletide organization which annually during the depression collected baskets of food for distribution to the poor. Day's caller informed him, heatedly and in dialect, that the apples in her basket were filled with worms. He should come immediately and sort out and remove the offending fruit from her home.

Ken Bundy, later a dignified regent of the University of Colorado and owner-publisher of several Colorado weekly newspapers, realized a pho-

tographer's dream of retaliation. Press photographers are among the most put-upon of mortals. Persons who will themselves crowd into the front row of group shots, waving goofily at the camera, become self-appointed defenders of the privacy of any other person on whom a lens is trained. Usually the hides of photographers are thick enough to take almost anything the obstructionist public wants to hand out, but sometimes a man can be pushed too far and on this occasion Bundy was. He had been assigned the Labor Day parade and brought along a stepladder so that he could shoot over the heads of the crowd. One man in the crowd took exception to the presence of a news camera and jostled the ladder each time Ken was set for a picture. Finally Bundy climbed down, snatched the man's straw boater from his head, and stomped on it. He was still jumping up and down on the shattered hat when police arrived. The city editor had to go to the police building and give personal assurances that Bundy henceforth would not tamper with the headgear of citizens and voters.

The *News*, of course, was outnumbered by the opposition on every assignment. Where the *Post* would send four men, a sob sister, and two photographers to cover a story, the *News* could spare one hurried reporter and a photographer who had a half dozen other appointments within the hour. *News* men said this was just about as it should be, that one *News* reporter was the equivalent of at least five small-bore *Post* staffers, but they were whistling in the dark and knew it.

The *News* composing room, however, possessed one asset not to be topped in the *Post's* composing room, or any other. This jewel took the form of John Garrison, Linotype operator. In one person Garrison combined the rarely associated distinctions of president of the University of Chicago Alumni Association and chief of the Rocky Mountain Sunshine Club, a friendly circle of nudists. This sachem of the bare-bottom set is still a *News* printer. Like all dutiful Chicago alumni, he reads Disraeli and the other Great Books for light recreation. He also runs a stockbrokerage firm on the side and eats pecks of health-giving apples while rattling out prodigious amounts of almost errorless type from the console of his mighty Mergenthaler.

But John Garrison is not the sort of asset a newspaper can put into the bank, and the *News* was banking few assets of any kind between 1928 and the early forties.

Why did Scripps-Howard hang on in Denver? Surely the pleasures of publishing at consistent losses must have palled on even the stoutest and most dedicated of hearts. Why didn't someone just tap the *News* on the head and end the misery? The questions have been put to the men in the New York office who had to answer them at the time.

"Scripps-Howard doesn't quit very often," William Chandler replied. "We felt all along that there was room for a Scripps-Howard morning

paper in Denver. We tried to look at the encouraging signs, rather than the losses.

"We also hung on because the *News* gave Scripps-Howard better national coverage. The *News* fills a big gap on the map. The operation is a two-way street, you know. The *News* helped UP and NEA with coverage of a big Western area.

"And then I suppose we were emotionally involved, too, and we recognized that the *News* was an old paper with a fine history, a long record of service to Denver. Papers have personalities, just as human beings do. The *Rocky Mountain News* is one that does. Circulation, sales, profits are not the whole answer. In some towns no paper has it—character and quality. Some have it, some don't. The *News* does."

Roy Howard, the man who had to pick up the tab, had much the same explanation.

"We didn't quit in Denver because Denver is a key spot in Scripps-Howard," he said. "We made mistakes, and there were unfortunate editors, but the Denver experience was one of the greatest lessons I ever learned in the newspaper business. We wanted a paper in Denver, and we were willing to fight and pay for it.

"There are certain cities where you feel you need a paper, and the considerations are not just economic. The *Washington News* is the same sort of situation. We wanted a show window for Scripps-Howard in the nation's capital so we could let congressmen see what we were saying in their own communities. In the same way we wanted a Western paper in Denver as part of a balanced national program.

"We all felt that way, not just me. I didn't do anything, and I hate that damn perpendicular pronoun. *All* of us realized, I think, that when you get the right combination of editor, business manager, and program you eventually win. It took some time before we finally hit on the right combination, but we did. It frequently happens in American journalism that when you're trying for an editorial result and to render service that the chances for success become greater than if you were just trying to make money. But you still need a sound economic situation."

The situation in Denver was far from sound, and the balance sheets showed it. The lawyers and businessmen in the Scripps-Howard general management group began reminding their idealistic editorial colleagues, with some insistence, of the unpretty facts of life. Determinations wavered. Finally the whole matter was threshed out at a financial meeting in New York on April 16, 1940, and the *News* came close to dying that day. Some of those in authority argued that the losses should be written off as money down the drain and Scripps-Howard should pull out of Denver. They made a convincing case. But there was one strong dissenting voice.

"It virtually had been decided to turn the key in Denver," Jack Howard remembers. "Being brash and inexperienced, I protested vigor-

ously. It seemed to me inconceivable that the only morning paper in a city the size of Denver couldn't survive, particularly since it had only one other competitor.

"It was Deac Parker who said that if I felt so strongly about it, why didn't I do something about it. I said I would. In a matter of days, I went to Denver, met Al Houser, who had been business manager in San Diego and then was trouble-shooting around, and together we looked over the problem.

"We concluded there was hope for the *Rocky Mountain News*. My conclusion was undoubtedly based on inexperience, and if it doesn't sound uncharitable, Al's conclusion was probably due to the fact that he didn't have any other job at the time. Anyway, we returned to New York and secured a reprieve which led to a new life for the *News*. I don't take credit for the new life, but I sure can accept, in all modesty, credit for the reprieve."

The general management took up the matter of the *News* again on May 8, listened to Jack Howard's report, and decided that it would require time and more money but there seemed to be a way out. The *News* and its troubles were wrapped into a package and handed to young Howard as a personal special project.

Although he had been president of Scripps-Howard Radio, this was his first major assignment on the newspaper side of the organization. A dozen years later he would be in command of the entire operation. In 1940 he was still fighting his big battle: to make his own way, live his own life, in the shadow of a famous father.

Jack Rohe Howard was born August 31, 1910, in New York City. He went to Exeter, in which he still takes a personal interest as one of the school's most active alumni, and in 1932 was graduated from Yale. During the summers of his college years he worked for the United Press in London, Rotterdam, Paris, and New York. In order to get to his job in London he signed on as a steward and waited tables aboard the SS *Leviathan*. Howard is no stranger to the ranks of newspapering. He has worked as reporter, copyreader, telegraph editor, and news editor, beginning in 1932 in Tokyo on the *Japan Advertiser* and then on the *Shanghai Evening Post and Mercury*. Before leaving the Orient he was briefly UP correspondent in Harbin, Manchukuo. Back in the United States he got a job as courthouse reporter for the *Indianapolis Times*, by chance the same beat his father had covered thirty years earlier. He also worked in Indianapolis as police reporter, rewrite man, and copyreader, then went to the *Washington Daily News* as telegraph editor and news editor under Emie Pyle and John O'Rourke.

In 1936, Jack switched briefly to radio at Knoxville and a year later moved to New York as president of Scripps-Howard Radio. He has been in the New York office since, except for navy service during World War

II. He became assistant to John H. Sorrells, executive editor of the chain, in 1939 and succeeded his father as president in 1953. Sorrells has left this close-up sketch of his onetime assistant:

. . . Jack served a pretty rigorous apprenticeship before he finally got himself equipped with a small, one-window office, a secretary and a phone of his own. As a matter of fact, Jack's apprenticeship began when he was a small fry.

Like most men with sons, Roy had a sense of dynasty, and it was natural that he should want his son to carry on with his chosen career. Besides the shop talk that inevitably went on around the house of a newspaperman, Jack took what amounted to a reading course in some of Roy's correspondence; he met, in his home and elsewhere, a great many of his father's acquaintances who were either figures in journalism, or who made news in their time. His training was deliberately pointed for a newspaper career. . . .

The old saying, "as the twig is bent, the tree will grow," has validity when it's certain the twig has been bent. Many fathers make sincere and, they believe, faithful efforts to refrain from trying to shape the twig to their own desires, but few of them can resist the temptation. Further, it requires a supple twig, sound at the core, to resist efforts to bend it this way or that. The hardest thing Jack has faced, and perhaps his greatest accomplishment, has been his successful determination to grow according to his own ideas and designs.

The easiest thing he could have done was to go into some other line of business, or into some other newspaper concern. A man takes chances with his own growth and future stature, when he comes up in the shadow of his father's reputation and accomplishments. It is no easy thing to stand for the measurement of comparisons.

Jack decided to take it the hard way—to hazard the shadow, to stand for the measurements. He believed that he would be able to walk in his own shoes, on his own path, at his own gait. He has done that, to an extraordinary degree. . . .

Jack has quick perceptions; he learns fast and retains what he learns. He has a knack for figures, and statistical data do not frighten him. He is inclined to keep his own counsel.

Jack has the capacity to put himself in the other fellow's shoes; he is tolerant and generous in his estimate of people, and he rarely speaks unkindly to anyone. In a controversy, his convictions might be no less strong than Roy's, but Jack has greater capacity for understanding the other fellow's side of it. It is Roy's nature to stir things up—Jack's instinct is to harmonize dissensions. Every now and then he undertakes to pick up some of the chips Roy scatters about.

Jack likes people; he is intensely loyal to his friends. He likes parties that generate fun of a slightly rowdy sort. . . . He travels mostly by plane, likes to fish and hunt, and enjoys driving a car, an art at which he is expert despite one bad spill.¹⁸

¹⁸Sorrells, *op. cit.*, pp. 126-31.

Late in the fall of 1940, Jack Howard asked a young man about his own age to drop up to 230 Park Avenue from the *World-Telegram* plant far downtown on Barclay Street. There was an editorship vacancy. Would the young man like it? The response could have been bottled and sold as a tonic. Jack Foster was headed back to Denver.

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

Up from Slavery

A PROPER history usually ends at some convenient date, often arbitrary, well into the past. There are hazards involved in attempting otherwise—even when the purpose is wholly informal. For history, be it ever so unceremonious, is above all else perspective; and there's no place to stand for a good, true look in depth at contemporary times. What seems to be important or notable or interesting in the current scene may lose by tomorrow all claim to significance, leaving behind only a sort of semihumorous quaintness. This is a truism which becomes, eventually, a sobering reality for every professional newspaperman: nothing is so new as the next edition. And nothing is quite so old, everyone knows, as yesterday's paper. Lee Casey once wrote that, in the largest sense, neither the biography of a man nor the history of a city can be written while either is alive. Possibly the position is extreme, since it would rule out Lee's own good friend Gibbon and would confine to such municipalities as Thebes and Trebizond the privilege of "our fair city" record-keeping; but the general rule is sound and surely it applies also to a newspaper. Time makes the only valid judgments in these matters, and there has been no time.

Yet to leave Denver and the *Rocky Mountain News* on the eve of the still unresolved World War II would be to omit what seems to be, at this moment, the brightest chapter in their continuing joint story. What has happened since then cannot be ignored here. The judgments can be only tentative, in the long view, but they cannot be dodged on the easy pleading that no one knows yet whether it all means anything, historically or philosophically. That is a decision for poets, anyway.

Two apparent facts stand out: change and growth, the one to be expected in the natural order of organic things like newspapers and cities, the other not necessarily so. Denver has changed and grown tremendously during the 1940s and '50s, and the *News* with it. Few cities in America have grown so rapidly, and few newspapers. The parallel still is precise. And it is not a universal or national pattern. There are American cities whose growth became essentially stabilized, for good or bad, in spite of an undiminished shift of population from farm to town during these mid-century decades. Even in still growing cities many daily newspapers have died.

The *News* came close to being one of the deceased.

When young Jack Howard was handed the *News* and its problems as a prize package in 1940 the outlook, he concedes, did not justify his optimism that something could be done. He spent much of the year commuting between New York and Denver. His initial visits caused staff apprehensions that the ax, finally, was about to fall. Long and critical conferences were held with Lee Casey, who was acting editor, and George Burns, then business manager. Howard and Al Houser met with T. M. Pepperday, Western business manager for Scripps-Howard, with circulation manager Bob Boyd, the pressroom crew, the ad solicitors.

"We tried to emphasize that we were not in with axes but had vitamins to distribute," Howard recalls. "But we were not too encouraged. Sins of omission, rather than of commission, seemed to be responsible for the plight. The editorial product was not the major problem. It stood up well measured against itself. I spent a lot of time trying to relax the paper. It seemed tense and inflexible."

Typography was spruced up. The comics were worked over, and the Sunday magazine and features improved. Effort was made to work "bright spots" of pleasant, humorous, or relaxed articles and features into the increasingly war-dominated and gloomy news budget. Daily program listings of all Denver radio stations were inaugurated. The *Post*, following its long-time custom, had enemies among the radio stations and imperially refused to recognize the existence of several. A comprehensive listing by the *News* proved popular.

Howard paid calls on the corporal's guard of advertisers, and patiently made the rounds of a much longer list of merchants whose advertising was needed. A. B. Trott of Daniels & Fisher's, always a friend of the *News*, assured him that the "horse is not dead," Jack remembers.

The old masthead picturing the Denver sky line was restored. Herndon Davis, talented local artist, was employed to do a series of paintings of historic Denver mansions and buildings, text by Joseph Emerson Smith. The series rang bells with old-timers, and James Quigg Newton, financier and intimate of Casey's, bought the paintings for presentation to the Denver Public Library's Western Collection. Howard observed on June 6 that circulation looked good and on July 24 that it had hit a new daily high. Home delivery in the city went above 23,000 copies for the first time. Ed Leech came to town during the summer and said he felt the paper never looked better. Staff morale was climbing out of the ruts.

Howard was back in September. He worked over the Sunday edition. Deliberate efforts were made to evoke letters to the editor. Praise, argument, or what not—anything but that awful silence out there on the other side of the presses. Local news coverage was stepped up, and it was noticed that as the war situation deteriorated in Europe public reaction

was better to any small scraps of good news, local or national, than to all the elaborate war reports being poured into print. American isolation was dying hard.

A universal copy desk was installed to handle news from all departments except sports. Walter Morrow had tried a fragmented system in which each department did its own editing and headline writing. In October a saleslady jumped to her death from an upper floor of the Denver Dry Goods Company. The store asked that its name not be associated with the tragic incident. The temptation to comply must have been strong; the Denver Dry ad account was one of a very few that amounted to more than nickels and dimes. The *Post* withheld the store's identity in its late editions that afternoon, but Howard decided the name would have to be used lest injury be done to other downtown stores, many of which were non-advertisers.

Jack attended the stereotypers' picnic and confessed afterward that he drank more beer than he really wanted. He relaxed amiably about the city room and business offices, drawing slowly on his pipe, listening and watching. Gradually he became accepted as an ally rather than a hatchet man from the New York office. The pruning knife was sharpened to lop off the free distribution of 70,000 copies of the paper to Denver doorsteps every Friday morning. The blanket giveaway produced an artificial circulation bulge and some revenues, but Howard was seeking a sounder operation.

Meanwhile Roy Howard had suggested Jack Foster for the vacant editorship. Foster was young, energetic in Roy's own coattail-scorching pattern, and he had been doing a good job on the *World-Telegram*. H. W. (Bill) Hailey begged for the job of business manager in Denver. Many of his associates calculated he had come loose at the hinges. But Hailey had been a Westerner much of his life, had learned to roll his own from Bull Durham, and he was sick of shuttling between Connecticut and the Grand Central Building as director of promotion and research for the Scripps-Howard national advertising department ever since 1936. There wasn't a friendly horse to be seen on the whole New York, New Haven & Hartford line.

Hailey came to Denver in October of 1940, and Foster the following month. A new team was on the field, and they started play, in Roy Howard's phrase, "with the ball behind their own goal line."

Jack C. Foster was born June 29, 1906, in St. Joseph, Missouri, where his father was city editor of the *Gazette*. He spent his boyhood in Oklahoma City and Cleveland, and by the time he was seven was a part-time office boy at the *Cleveland Press*. He was covering sports at fifteen, and at nineteen had served a turn at nearly every job in the newsroom from running the switchboard to police reporting and make-up. He literally grew up in the *Press* plant, took a sabbatical two years at Western Reserve University, and became a full-time cub

under Max Cook, then city editor. In 1926 he was doing general assignments and rewrite for the *Press* when the stirring sounds of newspaper war in the West reached his ears. He applied for a transfer to Denver and for more than two years gave and took his lumps in the wild fray. Jack switched to New York to write a daily radio column for the *Telegram* in February 1929—the president of the National Broadcasting Company once said there were only two honest radio columnists in America, and Foster was one of them—and he was assistant city editor in 1931 when the *World* was purchased. But his health broke, and he was a long two years recovering it, followed by another two years on a world tour which was part convalescence and part a writing assignment for the Scripps-Howard organization. He was back at the *World-Telegram* in 1937 as departmental editor and then as assistant executive editor to Lee Wood. He hadn't been back long when he found a bride, a pixy Georgia belle, on the staff. He and Frances Mangum were married August 30, 1938.

Like the founding editor of the *News*, Foster is a mountain climber. His holidays are spent in the hills, hiking, skiing, and jeeping. He and his wife remodeled an old house in Idaho Springs as an operating base for their tours. They collect ghost towns and abandoned mines, and there's scarcely a back road or a mountain trail in the state they do not know. Jack often walks to work for his health, which now is robust, and sometimes writes a column about what he sees on his walks. The pieces frequently are nature essays, love letters to the Colorado sky, birds, trees, parks, peaks, and stray dogs. He is a man very much in love with the place where he lives. He is also fond of travel in Italy—the Italian government returned the admiration by making him a *Cavaliere Ufficiale*—of Anatole France, airedales, Chinese cookery, and St. Francis of Assisi. He is normally gregarious, enjoys a party, and is no hermit, but he likes to be alone, reading or pottering about in the mountains with his dog. "It does something for me that is hard to explain," he once said.

As an editor Foster is a working newspaperman first and an executive only secondarily. He is a writing editor who declares his shots: "I'll have a piece this afternoon"—and then consistently squeaks through scant minutes under the final deadline. It's difficult to keep him out of the center of a fast-breaking story. He wants to handle the rewrite, read copy, write the headline; meanwhile wishing out loud that he could be the leg man and really get in on the action. He once interrupted a ski outing at Winter Park to help capture an escaped gunman-killer on a train in Middle Park. He phoned his story, sped back over snowy Berthoud Pass, and reached Denver in time to read proof, do the head, and supervise make-up. A photo layout in the making is to Jack as strong drink is to an alcoholic: he can't leave it alone. Any subeditor with a handful of fresh prints and a vision of an eye-stopping layout must hide the pictures from Foster or the job will be whisked away

from him. All of this comes under the heading of "having the boss in your hair while you've got a job to do" and it might slow the operation, except that Foster is swifter, surer, and more proficient at any of the tasks than almost any member of his staff. He didn't forget the routines of the trade when he became a policy maker.

Foster is not a second guesser as a boss—probably because he participates in or makes nearly every major decision in advance. The *News* is a highly personalized operation, centering on Jack's uncanny and fully proved sixth sense about the public's mood and interests. His subordinates reach hour-to-hour decisions by guessing or knowing what Jack would want. This is neither as poisonous nor as much a shot-in-the-dark technique as it might seem.

In the first place Jack and his staff know each other very well, and they work together in a wholly relaxed atmosphere. Foster is not the sort of editor who cushions himself behind several ranks of assistants, and his operation escapes the tensions and uncertainties such insulation ordinarily creates. He is on a first-name, give-and-take basis with each staff member. The door of his office stands wide open. Any reporter is welcome to walk in—if he can find a gap in the steady stream of callers. Jack is a good judge of capabilities, and he never neglects to note, and encourage, individual special interests. His staff members, in their turn, soon come to know the boss. There's never much doubt in anyone's mind about what he likes and wants. And the first of his wants is a simple, unpretentious telling of the news. He does not admire "heavy" news heavily reported "for the record" or to evoke illusions of false dignity, omniscience, or infallibility.

In the second place Foster is persuadable. He has his fair human portion of prejudices and blind spots, but in the councils at which major decisions are reached or policies formed his mind is no clamshell. He makes the final determinations and accepts responsibility for them; he does not bulldoze the discussions in which they are shaped, and the men closest to him are not yes-men. Associate editor Bob Chase, acrid and even at times downright negativistic, always can be counted upon to submit a growling, outspoken dissent if he feels one is called for, and he keeps a sharp needle handy to puncture projects inflated with spur-of-the-moment exuberance. He relishes the role of devil's advocate. Managing editor Vincent M. Dwyer is a direct, much-respected former city editor and police reporter with a tough competence built on experience. He is also Irish, and on occasion he gets it up in support of what he considers right, proper, and efficacious. Ordinarily soft-spoken, Dwyer can become jut-jawed with conviction and drive his points home, quite literally, with finger jabs to the other fellow's chest. Sometimes the other fellow is Foster. But neither Chase nor Dwyer, nor anyone else, is in doubt about who's running the *Rocky Mountain News*.

The firmness is seldom overt and never imperious. Foster does not

summon his managing editor; he asks, "Have you got a minute, Vince?" A cub reporter will be called into the front office with the same phrase. It's one clue to the personality.

Foster is warm, responsive, and approachable. He is an excellent listener. There's a strong streak of the poet in his nature, and it asserts itself in a quick sensitivity. Jack Howard says of him: "His antennae are out all the time. The slightest disturbance registers." His enthusiasms are spontaneous and boundless and his vitality exhausting to others. The pace he sets for himself is headlong. He slowed down long enough in 1948 to go into a hospital and have his appendix removed, and the city-room wit offered to make book that "when they cut open the boss's belly, they'll find nothing but one great big adrenal gland."

The abundant energy and enthusiasm go a long way toward explaining Foster's dominance of his newspaper and the dramatic progress it has made under his direction. The recent success of the *News* is intimately involved with the Foster personality and almost entirely dependent upon his capacities. He assumes not only the line responsibilities of command but also the staff functions of feeding up ideas, supervising their execution, and nursing through the final product. In a single day Jack's restless mind can spark off enough ideas to keep his relatively small staff occupied for a week. Subordinates sometimes complain they're so busy following through on Foster's hunches that they seldom have a chance to try out one of their own. All of this runs counter to much accepted executive and management theory, since it supposedly tends to thwart initiative in young men on their way up, but the ultimate measure of management is its pragmatic success or failure, and the core fact of Foster's editorship is dazzling success. He took a journal which was starving to death, surviving on largess and sufferance, and turned it into one of the top-ranking morning newspapers of America, a force in its community such as it had not been since both were new and starting out together.

Foster's partner in the spectacular conversion was a fortuitous combination of complementary qualities. Howard William Hailey is deliberate, slow-moving, and slow-spoken in a deep, gravelly bass. He is as imperturbable as Foster is effervescent. Short, compact, and muscular, with a sun-lined and weathered face, Bill Hailey looks like a Western rancher, which he was, part time, and is now again in retirement. He loves horses and does his own chores. The gruffness and hardheaded practicality conceal an intense loyalty which Bill would just as soon nobody ever noticed.

Hailey was born July 8, 1892, in Calhoun County, Illinois. He ran a weekly newspaper in Barry, Illinois, as his first job out of high school. From it he accumulated a stake which permitted him to enroll in the University of Missouri journalism school, but he left college in 1917 to serve with the American Ambulance Field Service in France. He switched

to the newborn Army Air Corps and rounded out his World War I service as a Red Cross relief worker in the Balkans. Following the war, he kicked around the West in advertising and magazine work, with stops in Denver, Colorado Springs, El Paso, and Phoenix before joining Scripps-Howard in 1931 as promotion manager of the El Paso *Herald-Post*. He held the same job with the San Francisco *News* and then went to New York in 1936 as director of promotion and research for the entire chain. Formal appointment as business manager of the *Rocky Mountain News* came January 15, 1941. Ill health forced Bill's retirement in 1957 to a small ranch near Sebastopol, California. His successor is B. W. (Wally) Lewis, who joined the *News* advertising staff in November 1941.

The first years were not auspicious for the new team of Hailey and Foster. As they took over circulation was 41,799 daily and 44,645 Sunday. Advertising lineage was at its lowest ebb in more than a decade; only 3,785,309 lines were published during 1940. Neither set of figures would drop as low again, but for the first couple of years it was a grim struggle against long odds and dead-weight inertia. Foster spruced up the old paper, lit fires among all but extinguished embers, and gradually began to draw out the freer, briefer, livelier brand of journalism which has become his trade mark; but the gains were discouragingly small and slow in coming. The *News* was getting to be a better, more readable newspaper, but no one seemed to notice, and the advertisers, Hailey recalls, "continued to give us a good ignoring."

Then war came again. The *News* got out its big type, as it had for Robert E. Lee and the hopeful Sibley, for Roman Nose and Sitting Bull, Aguinaldo, Kaiser Bill. On Sunday, December 7, 1941, the presses rolled steadily through the day with a series of five "War Extras" dated Monday morning, December 8. The dust was cleaned from old, battered wooden types three inches deep to spell out: "JAPAN DECLARES WAR ON UNITED STATES! Bombers, 'Chute Troops Attack Honolulu. Heavy Damage Reported." A front-page editorial, "The Drumming Guns," leaned on Kipling:

*"Till, dazed by many doubts, he wakes
The drumming guns that—have no doubts"*

Kipling wrote that, back in 1894, of "An American" and "The American Spirit."

America has been attacked. The drumming guns are sounding, and many problems have been solved on yesterday's Sabbath day. Chief of these is the problem of national unity. We will have that unity—from here in.

America now turns, as Kipling said, "A keen, untroubled face home, to the instant need of things."

World War II wrenched and changed Denver, as it wrenched and changed America. The young men went away, to write home from or die in far-off places never before on local maps. Denver learned where Guadalcanal was—one of her boys was a hero there—and Anzio, where many died. The pace of the city quickened, and other young men in khaki came to replace, momentarily, those who went away. Lowry Field was activated in 1937 in buildings which had been constructed in 1903-4 as Agnes Phipps Memorial Sanatorium for tuberculars, far out on the southeastern fringe of the city with much open prairie intervening. The build-up was rapid. By 1942 forty million dollars had been spent on construction and sixteen million for equipping a key Army Air Corps technical training command center. Soon Lowry was training 15,500 students annually in armament, photo, and clerical courses. Following the war, Lowry Field became Lowry Air Force Base, and it is still a major training installation with personnel totaling ten thousand upward. It became the "Summer White House" for President Eisenhower and the temporary home of the Air Force Academy when it was established in 1954. The Academy moved, during the summer of 1958, to its new campus in the foothills fifty miles south of Denver and just north of Colorado Springs. Meanwhile Denver grew up to and virtually surrounded Lowry and its huge hangars and runways.

Lowry was not the only military post. Southwest of the city is Fort Logan, dating back to 1887. Dwight D. Eisenhower had been a second lieutenant there when he met the Denver girl who became his bride. Fort Logan was reactivated and the old post became in succession an Air Corps clerical school, induction center, convalescent shelter for wounded fliers, a discharge center, Veterans Administration hospital, and finally a national cemetery.

Construction began in April 1942 for twenty-million-dollar Buckley Field, east from Lowry, named for Lieutenant John Harold Buckley of Longmont, killed in France during World War I. Buckley was an armament school for the Air Corps. Today it is a naval air station and home field for the Colorado Air National Guard. At Colorado Springs, Peterson Air Field was created, also in April 1942, as a tactical air photo school. Subsequently it became headquarters for Second Air Force and was used for training of heavy bombardment groups. It was named in honor of Lieutenant Edward L. Peterson of Englewood, first pilot who lost his life there. Peterson Field was followed by Ent Air Force Base within the city of Colorado Springs, now headquarters of the North American Air Defense Command and charged with the mission of defending the entire continent.

Other air bases were built at La Junta and Pueblo. South of Colorado Springs, Camp Carson, named for Kit Carson, was built in 1942 and became Colorado's largest ground troops installation. High in the Holy Cross National Forest, twenty-five miles northwest of Leadville at Pando,

ski troopers were trained at Camp Hale, beginning in the winter of 1942-43. Camp Hale honored the memory of General Irving Hale, leader of Colorado troops in the Spanish-American War, whose name is also perpetuated by Hale Parkway in Denver.

At Aurora, Denver's immediate eastern suburb, Fitzsimons Army Hospital was greatly expanded. The hospital was built in 1918 and named for Lieutenant William T. Fitzsimons, first United States officer killed in the First World War. Construction started in 1938 on a new 1800-bed hospital building which was completed just before war came.

War-born industry hummed in the Denver area. West of town, the \$122,000,000 Denver Ordnance Plant was constructed in 1941-42 for production of small-arms ammunition and artillery shells. The sprawling plant now is the Denver Federal Center, headquarters of various governmental agencies including the main research and planning branch of the U. S. Bureau of Reclamation. Northeast of the city the Rocky Mountain Arsenal began production in 1942 of incendiary bombs, gases, and other chemical warfare weapons. The army opened the Denver Medical Depot in 1942. At Stapleton Airfield a center for the modification of heavy bombers operated for three years beginning in July 1942. A thousand miles from tidewater, Denver became, by quirk of the fortunes of war, a shipbuilding town. A combine of relatively small metal-working manufacturers turned out prefabricated escort vessels for the navy and landing barges and floating piers for the army. The first Denver-built warship, named the USS *Mountain Maid*, was sent off to Mare Island in 1942 with "Pike's Peak to Tokyo—or Bust!" chalked on her hull.¹

War created special problems for a newspaper desperately trying for a comeback. Paper, gasoline, and tire rationing all hit at the *News* with disproportionate vengeance. Horse lover Bill Hailey sought to solve a part of his delivery riddle by buying two nags and a pair of antique milk wagons to make the rounds of downtown street corners. The horses were christened Blue Streak and Sunrise after two of the *News*' editions. Street circulators Sam Nadler and Morris Cohen, city boys born and bred, had never driven horses before. The beasts sensed, as horses will, that their apprehensive drivers could be intimidated. Nadler and Cohen were victims repeatedly of what beyond doubt were the last and final runaways on downtown Denver streets. The *News* cavalry was quartered at the old Elephant Corral on Blake Street, goal and stopping place of covered-wagon trains in the early 1860s.

The newspaper business, by and large, is a young man's game, and the war cut deeply into the staff. There are fifty-six names on the honor-roll plaque in the lobby of the *News* building. Four of the *News* men

¹Hafen, *Colorado and Its People*, Vol. I, pp. 587ff.

were killed in action: Ben ("Dago") Hoffman, Robert P. Deering, Myerl D. Saucerman, and William J. Rose. Many of the others returned to their old places on the staff, and a dozen or more are still on the job.

In 1941 and 1942 the young men began to leave, and the shortages began to arrive. Shoes, rubber, gasoline, nylons, steel, meat, and sugar. By September of 1941 an additional 2600 subscribers had been coaxed onto *News* circulation lists. But even so modest a gain—and everyone hoped to do better—was a mixed blessing with prospects excellent that, sooner or later, newsprint would be rationed to American newspapers. Bill Hailey saw the rationing coming. A couple of weeks after Pearl Harbor he called a meeting of Foster, Lee Casey, George Burns, Bob Boyd, and Wally Lewis to attempt a forecast of what paper rationing and other war problems would mean to the *News*. In course of the discussion Hailey tossed out a suggestion that scorched the varnish on the conference table.

He explained that when he had been riding the commuter's merry-go-round between New York and Connecticut he had started out buying two morning newspapers, the *Times* and the *Daily News*, to read on the train. As time went on he discovered he was arriving at the office with the *Times* unopened. He stopped buying the big paper and read only the smaller, more convenient one. He had acquired the tabloid habit. No one, he insisted, really enjoyed reading a tarpaulin-sized newspaper which demanded a spreadeagle posture of the arms and unlimited elbow room. How about converting the staid old *Rocky Mountain News* into a tabloid? "Now just wait a minute before you pass snap judgment."

Hailey ticked off some advantages. In the first place, ease of reading. A tab could be read on streetcars and busses, sure to grow increasingly crowded with auto production cut off and tires and gas on allotment. A tab could be read more easily at the breakfast table. It could be spread out more conveniently on a housewife's kitchen counter or a businessman's desk. A boon to bifocal wearers. The pace of wartime life was quickening; busy but events-conscious readers would appreciate a simpler, more direct, briefer and livelier presentation of the news. Then, take a look at it from the viewpoint of the advertiser. The smaller page size would permit more effective selling at lower cost. A full-page ad would become an even greater bargain. The small advertiser, particularly, would benefit. His modest ad would get more eye attention, would be less likely to be lost somewhere below the fold of a large-sized page. An advertiser could dominate a page at a fraction of current cost, and there would be more pages available for domination. Moreover, newsprint rationing was ahead, Hailey predicted flatly, and here was the crux of the situation. Circulation was inching upward, but the *News* would have less and less paper to print on. In a newspaper, bulk is salable, he insisted; no one wants to buy a skinny paper, and the already

slender *News* was headed toward emaciation as the war days passed. A sixteen-page tabloid would look and feel a lot more like a newspaper than a six- or eight-page dodger in full size. Available space would also be increased. By turning the chases sideways two five-column pages could be set into each eight-column form, thereby gaining a full column of valuable space for each two tabloid pages printed. Hailey also took a look at mass psychology. Something drastic, spectacular, with shock value was needed if the *News* intended to score the major gains for which everyone was working. Conversion to a tabloid would make Denver sit up and take notice that the *News* was a new and better paper. The advantages were obvious. Besides, Bill argued, big papers were merely a tradition that had become a rut. They weren't modern.

Burns and Lewis bought the pitch. Foster, Casey, and Boyd were hesitant. Maybe tabs were all right for New York and Chicago, but would the West go for one? "Tabloid" was a soiled word; it had been to bed too often with sensation and sloppy, hairbreadth reporting at the top of the lungs. To many persons the word meant a style of journalism, not just a page size. And it was a style, Foster and Casey felt, that Denver and Colorado might not cotton to. Foster was trying to get out a paper that was warmer, friendlier, closer to the readers, that paid attention to the decent everyday emotions of generosity, sympathy, and neighborliness. The strident tabloid reputation didn't seem to fit. Hailey countered: they were scaring themselves with a word. There was no reason why form should dictate content. Get out exactly that kind of a paper but offer it more conveniently. "Tabloid" was not another word for sin; it was only one way of printing a newspaper.

Finally, early in January, agreement was reached that the switch might work. The *News* was slowly dying anyway. Something bold and decisive had to be done. Hailey went to New York to submit his idea to the Scripps-Howard general management. He was sent on down to Washington to outline the plan to editor in chief Parker. Then, back in New York on a Monday morning, a full-dress session of the top brass met to go over the proposal in detail. Hailey sold his package to all the group except one. Paul Patterson, controller and general counsel, was pessimistic. It wouldn't work. "Better to close the door and throw the key away," he said. "Might as well save the few thousand dollars that are left."

Jack Howard and Hailey flew from New York to Tucson, where Roy Howard was vacationing, and word was sent to Jack Foster in Denver to meet them there. In a three-hour meeting Roy was low on prospects that the *News* could be saved. He didn't like the tabloid idea. He had seen it tried before and it was the "beginning of the death rattle." Denver, he felt, wouldn't go for such revolutionary tinkering with her oldest institution. At the end, however, he agreed. Go ahead and try it, he

said; it would be better for the paper to "die of heart failure than creeping cancer."

Foster and Hailey went to work with B. W. (Wally) Lewis, then advertising director, now business manager. Elaborate experimental dummies of news layout and advertising arrangement were prepared, torn apart, and remade. A secret room at the Albany Hotel was rented in which plans were developed and presentations made to key advertisers. No word of the change-over was permitted to leak out; it would be a startling move, and full impact was to be exploited. At last, after three months of experimentation and development, the *News* appeared on Monday morning, April 13, 1942, in five-column format. There was a bold black headline on the front page: "Reds Shatter 12 German Tank Attacks." Beneath the headline appeared a four-column photo of a landslide in California, and a page-one box said, "Here We Are! . . . the new Rocky Mountain News geared to the swift pace of modern times." On the editorial page, a one-column inset of page one of Vol. I, No. 1, accompanied an explanation of the conversion.

THE NEWS: A RE-BIRTH

The Rocky Mountain News appears today in a new form—a form in keeping with the demands of the times.

The page size is smaller. It is easier to handle, easier to read.

More emphasis is put on pictures. This is in keeping with the faster tempo of American life. Sometimes a photographer with a flick of a finger can tell a story far more vividly than any of us can spin in words.

Headline type is bolder, more vigorous, more legible. News stories are terser, more compact.

Pace of living has quickened. Pulse of production has been speeded up. With the revolutionary change of Colorado life has come the need for a crisper, more direct, more dynamically human type of daily newspaper.

The new Rocky Mountain News is designed to supply that need.

* * *

Exactly 83 years ago this month the first issue of The Rocky Mountain News rolled from William N. Byers' hand press on the bank of Cherry Creek. That was before either Denver or Colorado existed even in name.

We are proud of the tradition of this newspaper. Its history and growth have been part of the history and growth of the community and state.

Since that first issue appeared, Denver has been transformed from a mining camp to a great city.

Unlike other great American cities, Denver is not a seaport, it does not lie on a navigable stream, it lacks the natural resources that made Pittsburgh and Cleveland inevitably great.

Its development has come mainly from the courage and loyalty and

vision of its people and the ability of its people to find new solutions for new problems. Had it not been for these human qualities and strength, Denver today would not be a great city but a whistling post on some spur line.

* * *

A big job has been done. There are jobs as big just ahead.

This is a transition period. People are shouldering greater responsibilities and meeting new demands. Their requirements are different. News has become more vital than ever—but it must be made compact, simple, easy to get at. The worker on the way to the first shift at the Ordnance Plant cannot stop and twist himself out of shape to find an item deep within an inside page. Stories must be easy to read. Pictures must stand out.

The same requirements hold for advertising. Advertising—the right sort of advertising—is, of course, important news. It too should stand out, be easy to read.

The new Rocky Mountain News is designed to meet these needs. All the services and departments will continue—the United Press and Associated Press, Scripps-Howard Newspaper Alliance, the Chicago Daily News Foreign Service, the Acme Telephoto and Picture Service, Denver's only editorial page, the national and local columnists, the comics and, every Sunday, the great new magazine, Parade.

We change form eagerly because we know this change is an improvement, in keeping with the faster pace.

Colorado's first newspaper today becomes its youngest. Like Denver, it keeps step with the times.

April 13, 1942, also was the day Molly Mayfield was born.

Mrs. Molly Mayfield resists classification. She is no twittering Dorothy Dix. She is not merely Mrs. Fixit. John Gunther, who in 1947 found Denver "fascinatingly strange . . . immobile . . . the most self-sufficient, isolated, self-contained and complacent city in the world," described Molly's work as "the most original Advice to the Lovelorn column in the United States."² But advice to the lovelorn doesn't adequately describe Molly's art. There's more to it than that. She manages to be both saucy and levelheaded in her advice to the hundreds of correspondents whose letters reach her desk each day. She also is a bit of a minx and something of a tease, vivacious, mature, and always interesting. Gene Cervi once described her as "a combination big sister, mother-confessor, and female Scattergood Bains . . . an object of abiding respect wherever circulation figures are discussed."

Her column, "Dear Mrs. Mayfield," started off pretty much in pattern. She advised the wife of an Air Corps lieutenant to stick with him even though she didn't like military life. Buck up, there's a war on. A boy-crazy thirteen-year-old girl was taken on Molly's knee for a chastening:

²John Gunther, *Inside U.S.A.* (New York, 1947), pp. 223-24.

"Now, honestly don't you think 13 is a little young for beaux? Thirteen is such a nice age, if you'll just act 13. Not so long now and you'll be a young lady. Do enjoy this short time that goes before! Your mother is quite right—mothers so often are!—and I'm sure in your heart you know she is! M.M." Proper enough, and conventional. Correspondence grew more lively very soon.

A Denver wife wrote in to confess a unique revenge. Her husband was making a business trip to Kansas City and had packed his bag. The laundry delivered some clean shirts. The wife opened the suitcase to put the shirts in and found a frilly, gift-wrapped package inside. She opened it, of course, and found a sexy, sheer nightgown. "I mixed itching powder with sachet and sprinkled it all over the nightgown," the female Machiavelli told Molly. "Then I re-wrapped it and put it back in the bag. What should I do now, Dear Mrs. Mayfield?" A dirty trick, Molly chuckled, "but I loved it." The wife was advised to sit tight and play it innocent. Errant husbands were "usually big babies." Smite 'em hip and thigh, but dead-pan, sister, and cool.

"I never did hear further from my correspondent," Molly said later. "Always hoped I would. I'd give a pretty penny to know how things worked out in Kansas City."

But Molly is more than just a formidable adversary in the battle of sexes, and no mere entertainer. She's a power to be reckoned with in Denver. (And elsewhere. She now is syndicated to forty-five papers in the United States and Canada.)

She launched a campaign for a Better Business Bureau, and got one. When the city became lax in garbage collection she raised Ned and almost singlehandedly reorganized the sanitation services. She obtained pianos for churches, wheel chairs for invalids, and pool tables for USOs. In two days she collected fifteen hundred dollars to buy an automobile with special controls for a legless veteran. Glass eyes, then almost exclusively the product of a German art, became virtually unobtainable. Bushnell Veterans Hospital in Salt Lake City appealed to Molly. She asked for contributions and soon had several gross in assorted colors, including bloodshot. Orphans are entertained, and Molly throws an annual Christmas party for crippled children. The taxi companies fight with each other to provide the free transportation for Molly's guests. When a crisis developed out of the shortage of diaper pins, her readers came forth with tubfuls, and Molly rationed them out to service wives.

A Canadian Air Force unit at Calgary asked Molly if she could help obtain a Rocky Mountain canary as a mascot. A Rocky Mountain canary is a burro, and Colorado is fond of them. One of the most famous was Prunes, a gentle and musical mine jack, who aged gracefully and died happy as a pampered pet about the streets of Fairplay in South Park. Fairplay erected a monument to the memory of Prunes and speaks the name with reverence. The Fairplay Chamber of Commerce helped Molly

get a burro for the Canadians. The lop-eared little beast was christened Prunes II by the governor in ceremonies in front of the *News* building while a band played and thousands wept. Before the war was over Molly had sent off Prunes III, IV, and V as military mascots.

Thousands of dollars have been contributed to the Molly Mayfield Foundation. They are expended by a volunteer board of directors to provide medical services—in several cases rare and highly technical surgery—to restore hope to the hopeless.

At the request of a soldier in the South Pacific, Molly bought and delivered a cocker spaniel to a North Denver girl as a reminder that she should wait until Johnny came marching home. Another soldier in England asked if Molly would deliver two dozen roses to his wife on their first anniversary. Molly would.

Some of her correspondents were screwballs. One elderly lady wrote daily—and delivered the letters personally. She would stride into the *News* office, fold the letter into a toy airplane, and sail it majestically down the aisle of the business office. Another woman confided periodically over a period of four years that she was about to be kidnaped or slain by hate-filled relatives. One day she sent Molly a box of gumdrops given her by one of the relatives. She wanted Molly to taste them and see if they were poisoned.

Denver quickly earned a GI rating as a good “soldiers’ town.” There were USOs, community parties, and dances. Veterans’ groups arranged mountain outings for skiing and trout fishing. There were long waiting lists of families who wanted a soldier to come to Sunday dinner. And the native girls were friendly. Denver girls were living it up; never had the competitive bidding for dates been so brisk. Mrs. Mayfield fussed happily over her boys, complimented them on their appearance and deportment, arranged dates, smoothed over lovers’ quarrels, and publicly spanked the B-girls in the clip joints.

Mrs. Mayfield scored a hit early. Husbands read her to see what new deviltry she was cooking up. Housewives and mothers found that she gave sensible, down-to-earth advice interestingly. They liked her exchange service, by means of which one could swap a parakeet for green trading stamps, a crib for a tricycle. But the GIs at Lowry and Buckley fields adored her. As they shipped out they spread her fame to all the salty seas. Grimy clippings of her column passed from hand to hand on shipboard and at far-off bases. The crew of a bomber in the Pacific named their plane “Dear Mrs. Mayfield” and sent her a photo. On a steaming day in January 1945 at Hollandia, New Guinea, a sailor leaned over the rail of his ship and made conversation with a soldier patrolling the wharf below.

“Where ya from, Mac?”

“Denver.”

“Oh, Molly Mayfield’s home town.”

"Yeah. Quite a gal, eh?"

"You said it. Quite a gal."

The person behind "Molly Mayfield" is Mrs. Jack Foster. Her name never appears in connection with the column or its good works, and she takes no public bows, but the identity has become an open secret. Frankie Foster is a charmer, and the staff of the *News* enjoys telling the story of how their boss won her. Both were working for the New York *World-Telegram*. Jack had made up *his* mind and done everything in his power to convince Frankie that life as Mrs. Foster would be unrelieved bliss. Frankie was wavering, but she had plenty of suitors and, besides, being a New York career girl seemed pretty nice—temporarily, at least. Her by-lines were getting bigger all the time. But then an ugly little office rumor got started that the higher-ups were regarding her work as something short of indispensable. She graciously succumbed to Jack's entreaties. Some few safe years later Jack confessed he had planted the rumor himself.

With the help of his bride and others, Foster was putting out a better paper in 1942. The new *News* was a different kind of tabloid. It did not tear its shirt, bleed gore on its readers, or give keyhole reports on divorce suits. It seldom "scooped" unaware couples on prominent pregnancies. The page-one headlines were not much different, except bigger and blacker, from those of the Kansas City *Star*, the maiden aunt of American newspapers. The emphasis was on local news, when war developments permitted, and the approach was on a friendly, neighbor-to-neighbor basis. Sometimes it slopped over into a poisonous folksiness, and there were other errors, but gradually Foster's own personal warmth began to pervade his paper. He taught his reporters to write in freer, less wooden styles. He asked for originality and imagination—and some of the high flights were wowzers—in an effort to cast off the shackles of conventional dullness and journalese. Reporters were urged to talk with the people they were writing for, instead of trying to impress them.

To advance its program of more and better pictures, the *News* began receiving photographs by wire on June 9, 1941, via Acme Telephoto, predecessor to United Press International Newspictures. The telephoto machine became the "magic lantern" in city-room slang.

A "Service Edition" was inaugurated May 10, 1942. This was a quarter page of "News of the Home Front" set to narrow column measure and arranged so that it could be clipped out and mailed to men overseas or in training camps. Some of the items in the first issue included: "The crabapples are blooming on S. Marion Street Parkway. . . . The lilacs are gorgeous this year. So are apples; cherry and plum blossoms almost gone. . . . This has been an odd spring, with bright, warm days sandwiched in between cold storms that bent the trees with snow, filled reservoirs, caused floods, soaked the ground. The mountains shine high-piled with snow, off west. Crops and range will be good this year. . . .

The Auditorium was thronged all one day with the Grandpas' Registration—45 to 64. Said one, 'I know what this is for. They're going to extract the silver from our hair, the gold from our teeth, the lead from our pants—and junk us!' . . . Mrs. Rob Roy Buirgy, wife of a U. S. Bureau of Reclamation engineer, becomes Colorado's Heroine of the Week for sponsoring the 'adopt a soldier' idea. They entertain soldiers, write 'em, send 'em cookies. Want to be adopted?"

The innovations and redoubled efforts yielded some progress but not enough. The September 1, 1942, report of the Audit Bureau of Circulations showed the *News* had added more than 5000 subscribers daily and Sunday. Totals stood at 48,179 daily, and 53,415 Sunday. But the war was draining away his young staff faster than Foster could train replacements, and the newsprint squeeze was on. On some days the *News* appeared as a slim, adless paper of sixteen pages. Then papers without advertising became routine on Saturdays and Mondays. Advertisers were being won back to the *News*, but the paper now was forced to ration space to them because of the newsprint shortage.

The low point came as 1943 began. Again a decision had to be reached on whether the *News* could keep its doors open. The war news was bad, and prospects looked entirely bleak. Fold it up, some said. But it was discovered that cash assets totaled only thirty thousand dollars—not enough to pay off the help and shut down the plant. The *News* would have to keep publishing, at least until the bank balance could be brought up to the point where the old paper might die gracefully, untainted by bankruptcy or repudiation.

"Along about February, something happened," Foster says. "It still isn't clear to me what it was. I suppose a great many factors entered into it." The war news had taken a turn for the better. Molly Mayfield was going strong. Lowry Field was booming, and the town was thick with new uniforms and with new faces of strangers who had come to the city to man the war industries. Most of Denver's military and industrial build-up had come during 1942, and the accumulating forces reached a critical point so far as the *News* was concerned in February 1943. The tabloid format began to be popular, and Foster's lively innovations were catching on. Linage turned upward. Circulation began gaining in figures Bob Boyd rated statistically and geographically solid.

From this point onward the contemporary history of the *Rocky Mountain News* becomes a dramatic success story. There was a slight slump in circulation in 1944, when rising production costs and loss of ad revenues by space rationing forced a price increase from three to five cents a copy on May 1. Aside from this, the years from 1943 to the present have been a period of constant and phenomenal growth. Circulation more than trebled. Advertising lineage grew seven times, and for more than a decade has established a new record in each successive year. Seldom has a newspaper come so far so fast.

When the war ended the staff began to re-expand and mesh itself into the unit, which was able to sustain and even increase the momentum. Pasquale ("Pocky") Marranzino, Ed Oschmann, James H. Briggs, Dan Cronin, Ed Williams, Jack Castel, and Clair Jordan, among others, came home and shucked off their uniforms to resume their old places. Jack McQuaid, Jim Pierson, and Nick Cunningham moved back to their posts in the advertising department. During the war years the *News* had relied heavily on women to plug the gaps in a business which is essentially masculine. At one point Harry Rhoads and his daughters made up the photographic force. Frances Melrose, now entertainment editor and drama critic, became a mainstay of the city staff. Dorothy Collins was society editor, passing the job along to her assistant, Darlene Wycoff. Darlene, a statuesque, barefooted broth of a girl, evolved into the currently sedate fashions editor who is among the leaders of the semi-annual New York sessions of American dress designers and their critics. Her high level of romping good spirits around the office once led to a grouching dictum from Frank Plumb at the rim of the copy desk: "All big society editors should be cut in half to make two assistants."

The war had also brought some old-timers back into the harness. Men like Bob Seymour, a veteran whose service to Denver journalism dated back nearly half a century. Seymour sharpened up a batch of soft black pencils and sat in for several years on the copy desk.

On July 23, 1945, it was announced that managing editor Edwin D. Minter was leaving the staff to become executive editor of the *Albuquerque Journal*. Bob Chase, city editor off and on for nine of his eighteen years with the *News*, moved up to managing editor. His assistant, Gene J. Lowall, took over the city desk.

As peace returned, a new crop of reporters, soon to make their by-lines familiar in Denver, moved in from military service or clutching ink-fresh diplomas: Leo Zuckerman, Tom Gavin, Sam Lusky, Jack Gaskie, Bob Collins, Wesley French, Henry Still, Duncan Clark, Betty Caldwell, Bill Miller, Al Nakkula, Pat King, and Carol Untiedt and Elizabeth Wyner, both of whom became society editors. Jack Shannon succeeded Angelo O'Dorisio as chief editorial artist. Frank Willis and Robert Stapp switched from the *Post*, Willis to become librarian and Stapp the town's cleverest feature writer. Morton Margolin moved over from the Associated Press. Bill Peery, another fugitive from the *Post*, relieved Harry Rhoads as chief photographer, and Richard Davis and Robert Talkin joined the darkroom force. Leonard Tangney and Paul Lilly signed on, becoming respectively features editor and head of the copy desk. City editors of the era, in approximate chronology, were Warren Lowe (now business and financial editor), Vincent Dwyer, Dan Cronin, Bill Breneman, Sam Lusky, and Henry Still, the incumbent.

A couple of the by-lines were pen names. Johnny Timberline, a sort of domestic Lucius Beebe with overtones of Cholly Knickerbocker,

from time to time has commented on food, drink, and social giddiness in a preciously elegant style contrived to represent everything the rest of the paper tries to avoid. Willy Columbine began roaming the Colorado highways to report on doings in Skull Creek, Two Buttes, and Wild Horse. Willy attends the rodeos and inquires into the aspirations of local chambers of commerce.

The *News* gave Denver for a spell its first male society editor, a Western anachronism as startling as striped morning pants in a line camp. Jack Mohler was appointed to the job in December 1952, at his own request, and there were no wisecracks. Jack was an ex-police reporter, smoked cigars, and was a veteran of the army's campaign in Leyte. He left the *News* to become editor and publisher of the Colorado Springs *Free Press* for several years and now is a columnist for the Houston *Press*.

There were other occupational hazards. Photographer Bob Talkin spent several months mending in a hospital after he was trampled by a rodeo bucking horse which took offense at Bob's plans for a close-up action shot. Jack Gaskie, now a highly respected specialist in education news, acquired part of his own education because his desk stood close to the railing beyond which visitors entered the city room. Late one night a stranger leaned over the rail to ask Jack if he could arrange three witnesses to a holograph will. The caller wanted to leave his (unworking) gold mines, valued (he estimated) at two and a half million, to endow in perpetuity a free house of ill fame for Denver. The will made bequests of fifty cents to a first wife and a dollar to a second. Marranzino and Mohler, who teamed dangerously as practical jokers, shocked city editor Danny Cronin out of his usual laconic calm when they hired a midget to hide in his locker. Diminutive Al Nakkula, who has contributed more than his fair share to the newspaper lore of Denver, sought for some time to uphold singlehandedly the bibulous traditions of the press. Came a drear New Year's Day, but Nakkula hustled clear-eyed at his typewriter. A suffering colleague inquired pleasantly about how Al had made out the night before. "Ha," the little Finn snorted contemptuously, "*amateur* night! I was in bed by ten o'clock."

Between gambols, Cronin and Marranzino, Nakkula, Gaskie, and the rest were helping cover and report a five-alarm explosion.

CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

The Years That Shook Denver

DENVER has experienced several periods of sharp growth during her first hundred years. In the beginning the gold rush brought a massive population suddenly. But only a small fraction of those who came stayed. Solid growth began with the railroad era in the early 1870s. The eighties, heyday of the silver kings, contributed another spurt, and a third came in the first decade of the twentieth century when tourists, health seekers, and home hunters began to discover the climate. From about 1910 until the shape-up for the Second World War, Denver slumbered and lazed along, a quiet, pleasant, and handsome small city, but a little backward, too, parochially content, a retreat out of the main stream. Population gained slowly. Young men who were going places went elsewhere to find the places. Denver was called the "reluctant capital" of the West, the "city of dead pioneers." It was "prematurely gray," someone said.

And then, almost overnight, Denver was a boom town again.

With the same abruptness in which the Pike's Peakers had created Auraria from prairie-dog flats and willow bottom, Denver changed into a large city. It became, in the years immediately after World War II, one of the dozen or so "exploding metropolises" about which the editors of *Fortune* and *Harper's* have become concerned, along with Lewis Mumford, nearly all city planners and urban sociologists, and every man who drives his car to work. The Denver explosion was both more violent and more precipitate than most of the rest. In a little over a decade population of the Denver metropolitan area more than doubled. The equivalent of a city the size of Oakland or Atlanta was piled in rapid heapings on all that the previous nine decades had accomplished. Postwar growth was in many places dramatic; in Denver it was melodramatic.

Why? The question has not been answered satisfactorily. Basic resources, of course, and the jobs and opportunities that grow out of them. Oil, minerals, cattle, wool, the high-value products of irrigated agriculture, the bumper grain crops (sometimes) of dry-land plains exploited increasingly (and often brutally) with mass-production tools and methods. Then the cumulative effect of an expanding population on itself, the rolling snowball, especially when the economy was largely a

service one to begin with. More than half the wage earners keep busy by taking in each other's washing and repairing each other's shoes. Denver has found that in its economy one basic job supports 1.536 service jobs and 6.6 persons in the total population.¹

War industry put the expansion in motion about 1942: the Denver Ordnance Plant, bomber modification at Stapleton Airfield, shipbuilding and other metals fabrication, the Rocky Mountain Arsenal, rubber products, stepped-up food processing. "Defense" industry helped sustain the momentum with new factories for aircraft parts, electronic instruments, atom bombs, and guided missiles. The supersecret Rocky Flats atomic energy plant, tucked away in a foothills arroyo northwest of the city, was completed at a cost of \$45,000,000 in 1952 and has been expanded several times since. Denver never has found out precisely what goes on there, but several thousand men are employed in jobs that rate as "basic." The \$125,000,000 Rocky Mountain Arsenal, manufactory and storehouse of deadly nerve gas and other chemical warfare agents, also underwent several expansions. More recently, in 1956, the Martin Company built its \$35,000,000 Buck Rogers installation to the southwest and began work on \$380,000,000 in contracts for the Titan, largest of America's intercontinental missiles. A sizable electronics industry has grown up satellite to the Martin development. Soon, Denver is told, there'll be a vast laboratory north of Stapleton Airfield on Rocky Mountain Arsenal land to push forward research toward an atom-powered airplane. On the prairie southeast of the city, once the bombing range for Lowry Field, dirt is beginning to move for huge underground launching stations for the Titan missile. Under construction near Cheyenne, well within Denver's sphere of influence, are launching pads for the Atlas missile.

Accompanying the military and defense industry growth was a steady increase in other federal activities—and Denver always has enjoyed a favorable balance of trade where federal tax dollars are concerned. Boosters sometimes have called the city the "Little Capital of the U.S.A." because of the many offices and branches of nearly every federal department and agency. In 1954 the federal civilian payroll in the Denver area was estimated at \$76,000,000 annually.² Four years later, in a preliminary estimate, the U. S. Census Bureau made it \$96,000,000 to approximately 18,800 civil service employees.

Available brains and professional skills helped. The National Bureau of Standards moved its radio propagation and low-temperature physics laboratories from Washington to a foothills site south of Boulder (seventeen miles away by the new postwar turnpike) to take advantage

¹E. T. Halaas and others, *Working Denver: An Economic Analysis* (Denver Planning Office, 1953), pp. 27-28, 155-56.

²Denver Chamber of Commerce, *Industrial Survey of Denver* (1954), p. P-1.

of scientific man power clustered around the University of Colorado. Fresh strides were taken as a regional and national medical center of rank. New hospitals and research labs were added to the complex which already included Fitzsimons Army Hospital, world's largest military hospital. Biggest of the additions was the 500-bed Veterans Administration Hospital, integrated with the University of Colorado Medical Center. During the postwar years Denver medical scientists made basic and widely heralded contributions in the fields of cellular growth, hypothermia, heart surgery, virology, embryology, and the chemotherapy of tuberculosis.

The long, and continuing, campaign of the *Rocky Mountain News* for air progress paid off among the Russian thistles and sand dunes east of town. Seven major air lines now serve the city, and for four of them Denver is a principal operating base. Their big air liners drone constantly over the city, coming and going or "stacked up" and flying in circles to await landing instructions. Any glance overhead also takes in the contrails of jets. The long, thin man-made clouds go well with the blue Western sky. Often they catch and preserve the sunset long after the town and the peaks are in darkness. A city which ranks not higher than twenty-second in population (twenty-fourth in the 1950 census) now has the nation's eighth busiest airport, according to the Civil Aeronautics Authority's 1957 tabulation of arrivals and departures.

And tourists, of course. Vacationists, dudes, convention delegates, and other visitors long have formed a renewable natural resource in Denver, as elsewhere in the West.³ Its exact dimensions are difficult to gauge, but no one in Denver underestimates the importance of the resource or fails to be aware of the harvest. Tourism, also, grew in the postwar period. In 1950, it is estimated, Denver played host to 1,469,000 visitors who—bless them!—left behind something on the order of \$61,000,000 for food, lodging, and souvenirs of the Golden West.⁴ Travel now has climbed to the point where it is computed that Denver each year entertains three visitors for every one resident. Latest estimate is that 2,907,000 visitors came to Denver in 1958 and spent more than \$68,000,000.⁵

With the Juilliard Quartet taking up summer residence at Aspen and uranium prospectors with Geiger counters poking about in every cañon, nuclear physicists thinking long thoughts, with new dams being built and new tunnels being drilled, airplanes flying, missiles roaring, and Air Force cadets marching, with Texans and New Yorkers building skyscrapers and chemists wringing oil from dry and solid rocks—all in all, it was an era of expansive change. Colorado hadn't been in such a

³For an engaging history of Western tourism, see Earl Pomeroy, *In Search of the Golden West: The Tourist in Western America* (New York, 1957).

⁴Halaas, *op. cit.*, pp. 82–87.

⁵Denver Convention and Visitors Bureau.

ferment since John Gregory discovered his gulch. Perhaps the mountain West was becoming, as Morris Garnsey forecast early in the after-war decade, the new economic frontier for America.⁶

But Professor Garnsey appended some reservations and warnings to his provocative forecast, and most if not quite all of the growth factors which have been mentioned here were in operation in many other metropolitan areas which did not grow, as Denver grew, faster than America itself. People are, after all, the basic resource, and the West, for all its recent and rapid flowering, still doesn't have people. Colorado is by far the most populous of the Mountain States, yet its population density is 15.5 persons per square mile compared with 56.2 for the nation, 243 for Pennsylvania, and 719 for New Jersey. And nearly half Colorado's people are concentrated in the Denver area.

Population growth in Denver, and for Colorado as a whole, has outstripped resource development. So large a segment of the economy is based on "big government" and international tensions that a declaration of peace, unlikely as that may seem, could prove an economic disaster to Denver. Tourists, for all their delightful dollars, do not make for stability; if the budget pinches a vacation trip is likely to be among the first of family cutbacks. Moreover there is a point at which a service and distributive economy can no longer feed upon itself, at which a further accretion of population, lacking admixture of new wealth in proper ratio, becomes not an asset but a liability.

The clear and dominating fact in Denver, however, is spectacular growth, and neither federal subsidies nor basic resource development adequately explain it.

One has to fall back, at least in part, on a large intangible, almost in the realm of mysticism, which has operated upon mankind ever since Jason went after the Golden Fleece. The West, time out of mind, has been a mystery and a goal. The major shiftings of the earth's restless peoples have always been toward the west. In America, particularly, the "westward movement" has been a continental surge which has beguiled historians and poets. If it is a wholly rational migration the precise mechanics have not yet been established.

Economic opportunity doesn't do, entirely, as an explanation. Notwithstanding easy materialist theories, the pioneer did not always better himself when he came west; usually he found that he worked harder and earned less, but somehow things balanced off. Since his day there have always been Westerners—in the Ohio valley, on the Illinois and Iowa prairies, in the Colorado mountains, on the California strand—who have turned their backs on the larger rewards offered by the older, more

⁶A comprehensive and thoughtful summary of the potential of the Mountain States is offered in Morris E. Garnsey, *America's New Frontier: The Mountain West* (New York, 1950).

affluent societies to the eastward. "I wouldn't move back there for twice my salary." And some of those who say it mean it.

Perhaps the westering impulse is mechanistic, or maybe the answer lies rooted somewhere in the homely phrase "elbow room." Perhaps there is deep spiritual need for a room with a view, for uncrowding and uncluttering. Whatever the explanation—economic, spiritual, mystic, physical, or plain dumb perversity—America's westward movement continues, and at an increasing pace even though the continent presumably was settled and the frontier gone in 1890.

More than two centuries passed before the center of United States population vaulted over the Alleghenies. Since then, in half the time, the theoretical balancing point of the American people has marched westward nearly halfway across the continent. In 1940 the center was in Indiana. Ten years later it had moved on west to Illinois, and the 1960 census undoubtedly will disclose a further western shift.

For the past twenty years the trans-Mississippi West, except for a few rural-agricultural states, has grown economically and population-wise at rates well exceeding those of the nation as a whole. Much of the drift of the national center of balance to the west is explained by the spectacular growth of the three Pacific coastal states, but the Mountain States also underwent development at rates exceeding national averages, and Denver was in the forefront of the boom-time parade. During the decade 1930-40 the eight mountain states gained 12.1 per cent in population while the nation was increasing at a rate of 7.2 per cent. Between 1940 and 1950 the Mountain State increase was 22.3 per cent, ranged against 14.3 for the nation. Every indication is that since 1950 the comparison has been equally disproportionate, and probably greater. Denver, Colorado, and the Mountain States contain only a small fraction of the total United States inhabitants, but the portion is increasing sharply. (See Table I, p. 576.)

Net monthly migration to metropolitan Denver currently is calculated at 1600 persons, and the area has become one of the half dozen fastest-growing areas in its population class (500,000 to 850,000). The 38 per cent expansion between 1940 and 1950 put Denver at seventh rank in this group of sixteen areas. An estimate of a further 20 per cent increase between 1950 and 1955 advanced the area to fourth rank.⁷ The most recent study of these civic mushrooms puts Denver ahead another notch to third place.⁸ This latter report estimates Denver's growth between 1950 and 1957 at 37.5 per cent, exceeded only by San Diego's 55 per cent and Houston's 41 per cent. And the Denver Chamber of Commerce

⁷E. T. Halaas, *Population and Economic Trends in the Denver Metropolitan Area and the Rocky Mountain Region*. Interstate Commerce Commission Docket No. MC-263 Sub. 74 (Salt Lake City, 1955), pp. 5-10.

⁸City of Houston Planning Office, Jan. 1, 1957.

computes that the 1950-57 growth was 44.5 per cent rather than 37.5, going on to assert, moreover, that the 1950-58 increase was at a rate of 47.9 per cent.

TABLE I
POPULATION GROWTH RATES IN PERCENTILES

	Denver Metropolitan Area	Colorado Minus Denver Area	Colorado Mountain States	Eight Mountain States	United States
1900-1910	59.4		48.0	57.3	21.0
1910-1920	20.2	16.0	17.6	26.7	14.9
1920-1930	12.2	6.7	10.2	11.0	16.1
1930-1940	12.0	4.7	8.4	12.1	7.2
1940-1950	29.0	5.5	18.0	22.3	14.5

SOURCES: U. S. Census Bureau data as interpreted by Econometric Institute, *Industry in Denver and the Denver Industrial Area*, a report for the United States National Bank of Denver (Denver, 1950); and Halaas, op. cit., pp. 7-13. The Denver area is a standard Census Bureau metropolitan area comprising Denver, Adams, Arapahoe, and Jefferson counties.

Such estimates are notoriously subject to optimistic coloration, since chambers of commerce and planning offices are themselves peopled almost exclusively by more-the-merrier patriots. But if the Denver forecasts to date have been enthusiastic, they have been hard put to keep up with themselves, and none of the estimators yet has been tagged with an inflated statistic. On the eve of the 1950 census, for example, one prediction was for 413,000 for the city proper and 561,000 for the metropolitan area.⁹ The federal tabulators found 415,000 and 564,000. E. T. Halaas and his associates forecast in *Working Denver* (1953) that the area would have a minimum of 819,000 residents by 1970 and a

⁹Econometric Institute, *Industry in Denver and the Denver Industrial Area*, a report for the United States National Bank of Denver (Denver, 1950).

maximum of possibly 931,000. But by 1958 claim already was being made to 833,700 persons, and a new projection was looking for 1,100,000 by 1970.¹⁰ The arithmetical growth rate is likely to take a sharp hop upward in 1960, when it is anticipated the Census Bureau will enlarge the metropolitan area by inclusion of Boulder County with its 65,000 persons (up 34.6 per cent from 1950).

America's face was turned west in the postwar decade as it never had been before, not even in the dramatic days of the gold rushes.¹¹ The migrations, early and late, converted a "diggings" into a city. (See Table II, p. 578.)

Nor is population the only index. The West also is growing faster than the rest of the nation in rates of increase in employment, personal income, bank assets, capital spending, and manufacturing (value added). *U. S. News & World Report*, viewing the phenomenon with Eastern eyes, recently made a rough measure of comparative regional growth patterns by taking unweighted averages of these five economic indicators plus population.¹² It found that since 1940 the seventeen Western states have grown 66 per cent faster than the nation as a whole. Nineteen Northeastern states were 18 per cent under the national rate, and the twelve Southeastern states showed a 24 per cent gain.¹³

Another disinterested observer, Donald I. Rogers, business and financial editor of the New York *Herald Tribune* took a firsthand look in 1956 and found Colorado a "state of numerous economies" which was "expanding and diversifying in so many directions that even the most optimistic residents have been amazed." Equally amazed, he went on, "are the legions of new investors, many of whom are seasoned veterans from other growth areas."¹⁴ And Yale's city planning authority, Christo-

¹⁰John G. Welles, "Colorado in 1970: A Forecast," *Western Business Review*, Vol. II, No. 2 (May 1958), pp. 78-87.

¹¹For other comments and statistics on the westward movement as it has affected Denver and Colorado see Garnsey, op. cit., pp. 8-9, 19-22; *Newsweek*, Oct. 27, 1958.

¹²Oct. 24, 1958.

¹³The report's findings with respect to the West and the Northeast can be summarized thus:

	West	Northeast
Capital outlay for plant and equipment	up 930 per cent	up 531 per cent
Population	up 55 per cent	up 25 per cent
Employment	up 108 per cent	up 44 per cent
Personal income	up 455 per cent	up 285 per cent
Bank assets	up 379 per cent	up 160 per cent
Industrial product (value added by manufacturing)	up 770 per cent	up 411 per cent

¹⁴New York *Herald Tribune*, Apr. 8, 1956.

pher Tunnard, predicted in *Harper's* for August 1958 that by 1975 most Americans will be living in only fifteen great, sprawling, multinamed urban areas. One of the supercities, he indicated, will develop along the already highly urbanized axis which extends from Cheyenne to Pueblo through Denver. Time was, and not far distant, when on an auto trip

TABLE II
HOW DENVER GREW

	Area		Population	
	within City		City	Metropolitan Area
	(Square Miles)			
1864	3.52	No official record		
1870	6.08	4,759		
1880	6.08	36,629		
1890	17.02	106,713		
1900	47.92	133,859		
1910	58.75	213,381		246,800
1920	58.75	256,491		299,100
1930	58.75	287,861		352,500
1940	58.75	322,412		407,800
1950	67.18	415,786		563,832
1958	73.70	530,000		833,700

NOTE: Figures for 1958 are the Oct. 1 estimates of the Denver Chamber of Commerce.

from Cheyenne to Pueblo a visitor could have a liberal sample of the "wide-open spaces" which have been the West's stock in trade. Today cities, towns, and suburbs coalesce along much of the route. There are traffic lights at highway intersections where the hunting for ring-necked pheasants was good five years ago.

Both the soaring statistics of Denver's population explosion and the cheerful forecasts that it will continue apace are supported by most of the other indices.¹⁵

¹⁵A few of them, as supplied by the Denver Chamber of Commerce: Assessed valuation—\$710,426,550 in 1950, \$1,468,338,200 in 1957 (up 107 per cent); bank clearings (twelve major banks)—\$5,972,010,341 in 1950, \$10,344,769,300 in 1957 (up 72 per cent); construction valuation—\$105,796,000 in 1950, \$172,729,660 in 1957 (up 66 per cent); Colorado oil production—23,000,000 barrels in 1950, 55,000,000 in 1957 (up 139 per cent); peak month employment—221,700 in 1950, 322,000 in 1957 (up 45 per cent); retail sales—\$687,039,000 in 1950, \$1,123,700,000 in 1957 (up 63 per cent); passenger automobile registrations—188,353 in 1950, 312,708 in 1957 (up 66 per cent); per family expendable income after taxes—\$4457 in 1950, \$6044 in 1957 (up 35.6 per cent); value added by Colorado manufacturing—\$340,795,000 in 1950, \$641,074,000 in 1956 (up 85 per cent). Except as indicated, the figures are for the Denver metropolitan area, a phrase which thus far has served very nicely for descriptive purposes. The city has shown a rather admirable restraint in talking about itself; "Greater Denver" occurs only rarely.

It hasn't all been peaches and cream of course. Denver's municipal coffers have been scraped bare for the increased services to meet the growing needs, and the patience of citizens has been taxed by the new one-way streets and the lack of parking space (despite a lavish experiment in city-owned parking garages and lots). The city has experienced nearly every one of the problems and challenges outlined by the editors of *Fortune*,¹⁰ and even in trying to cope with a few of them. The *Fortune* writers noticed that in Denver, in spite of the urban sprawl, demand continues lively for apartment space close to the downtown district. New and lofty apartment houses have been springing up consistently on Capitol Hill, many of them on ground once occupied by the big brownstone mansions of the mining kings. But most of Denver's new problems orient themselves in the opposite direction. The suburbs now are growing at a more rapid clip than the heart city itself, and they have become the "bedroom towns" for tens of thousands of workers who add to municipal expenses and contribute little in the way of taxes. Yet a city payroll tax was rejected by the city dwellers who must themselves assume the unshared burden.

Some efforts have been made toward beautifying the cityscape, both downtown and through the development of additional parks, one of which was named for Mamie Eisenhower. Civic Center has been further expanded as a mid-city focal point by construction of a new public library, quarters for the Denver Art Museum, a downtown building for the University of Denver, a third annex to the state Capitol, and conversion of the old library into a headquarters for the all-important Water Department. Denver residents don't quite genuflect when they pass the Water Department, but the impulse is strong. The new Civic Center development has been accomplished without encroaching on the pleasant area of grass, trees, and well-tended flower beds.

Anyone who cuts down a tree in Denver these days, for whatever reason, usually has to reckon with the *Rocky Mountain News* columnists and editorial writers. The city mourns the passing of trees, individually, one by one: the elms at Courthouse Square, the old hackberry which had shaded carriages in the 1400 block of Court Place. Some resistance is developing to the uglier aspects of megapolis, but the city has not yet come to grips—though it has made two halfhearted passes at it—with the first-magnitude challenge of a severely blighting lower downtown district. The area from Larimer Street to the river has become an eyesore comparable to Con Edison's heap of grime next door to the United Nations in Manhattan.

The center of gravity of the downtown district shifted steadily up the hill during the postwar boom years, and it was in the uptown area that new and handsome towers went poking up into the squat sky line.

¹⁰*The Exploding Metropolis* (New York, 1958).

William Zeckendorf, the New York real estate wonder boy who got together the UN site, started the remaking of the Denver profile with his \$13,000,000 Mile High Center. He also built the new May-D&F department store on Courthouse Square, once the site of the Arapahoe County courthouse, and across from it now is building the Denver Hilton Hotel. More than any of the other builders, Zeckendorf has taken into account the need of city dwellers for urban vistas: pools of water with fountains, a bit of something green and growing, a quiet nook with a stone bench, a sunken ice-skating rink.

Zeckendorf's lead as a sky-line maker was followed by the Murchison brothers of Dallas, John D. and Clint, Jr., looking for new places to put oil millions to work. They put up the \$7,000,000 Denver Club Building and then, in 1958, completed the \$10,000,000, 365-foot First National Bank tower, currently Denver's tallest. Oil exploration, development, marketing, and refining luxuriated in the Rockies during the forties and fifties, and Denver became the hub of much of the activity. The oil interests banded together to erect the Petroleum Club Building on United Nations Square at the head of Sixteenth Street, and several of the companies individually constructed office buildings. The National Farmers Union contributed to the sky-line changes with its new headquarters topped by a lighted pylon which forecasts the weather. The slender, sand-colored spire of the Brown Palace West is scheduled for completion early in 1959, and the happy Irish boniface Charlie O'Toole will have more guests to welcome to the old hotel which boasts it is "where the world registers." O'Toole would like to change the name of Tremont Place—which runs past his door and under the second-story bridge to his annex—back to the original Clency Street.

The era saw political eruptions also. Pipe-smoking Dan Thornton, wealthy Gunnison cattle raiser who started out as a Texas cotton share-cropper and a Hollywood movie cowboy, recaptured the Statehouse for the Republicans briefly from 1951 to 1955 with *News* support. Another *News* candidate, a Democrat, took over at City Hall and raised a cloud of dust. Quigg Newton, a thirty-five-year-old silk-stocking and navy veteran, unseated Benjamin Franklin Stapleton, seventy-seven, mayor five times over for twenty-four years, nearly a quarter of his city's history. Robert Stapp wrote:

. . . After 24 years of Stapleton rule, the conclusion seemed inescapable that Denver had the kind of government it wanted—honest, imperious, resistant to change, slow moving, stodgy and safe.

But that wasn't the kind of government young Quigg Newton wanted. . . . Like many other returning veterans, he felt that his native city was missing the boat. . . .

Returning veterans were clamoring for houses, but an antiquated building code stymied large-scale, low-cost construction. Downtown

streets were choked with automobiles, driving endlessly around the blocks looking for parking places. Garbage overflowed in alleys. Visitors and new residents complained they couldn't find their way around because of illegible street signs. Residential streets were pocked with chuckholes.

Some of the outlanders who were pouring into the city had the temerity to complain about these things. They were rebuffed with the withering reminder that if they didn't like it they could damned well go back where they came from. . . .¹⁷

Newton was elected in 1947 and soon became one of the forces shaking the new Denver. He appointed a young cabinet and began cleaning a run-down house, catching up on improvements which had been put off for decades. He gave Denver a regime of conspicuously good, honest, and impartial government and an administration which attracted national attention for its vigor and enterprise. The American Municipal Association tapped Newton for a term as its president. The new-era mayor left office in 1953, became for several years executive vice-president of the Ford Foundation in New York, and now has returned home as president of the University of Colorado.

The *News* teamed with Yale-man Newton and with the late Dr. Florence Sabin, famous Denver woman scientist, for a broad-scale re-fashioning of health conditions in both city and state. Surveys had disclosed that Denver and Colorado were not, as advertised for seventy years, so healthful that the undertakers were starving. Newton turned municipal health services inside out and placed them under professional direction for the first time in a quarter century. The *News* made a major campaign in support of the "Sabin Health Laws," a code which reorganized the State Health Department from its basic regulations to its top personnel. Even the microbes got a good stirring up in the new and changing Denver.

Denver is still a city in which people deliberately choose to live, more of them every year, but there are dissenters who fight a philosophical rear-guard action against the changes. Poet-essayist Tom Ferril spoke for them in 1954. Too many tourists, he felt, had been given a taste of Colorado and now wanted to come back and stay.

I was born in Denver. I love every square inch of Colorado's 66,718,080 acres, but when somebody writes to me, asking how to spend a pleasant vacation in our beautiful Rocky Mountains, my innards tie up into knots. I loathe tourists, I hate myself when I get crowded into being one; my dearest friend, in the role of tourist, becomes leprous in my sight. . . . About a third [of the visitors to the Rockies] want to return, according to studies by the University

¹⁷Robert Stapp, "Denver: A City Wakes Up," *Frontier*, Dec. 15, 1949, pp. 5-7.

of Colorado, while two out of five insist that they are coming back to become permanent residents.

My antipathy to the whole business arises in part from this last point, but I don't blame the tourists half as much as I blame us Westerners ourselves. Our whole idea is to lure as many people as possible and get them to live here for keeps. The plain truth is that we are overloading a most tenuous water supply with people and industries—in an area that depends fundamentally, and must continue to depend on agriculture. . . .

Denver amazes me, I cannot understand it; the Denver area now has more than half a million people with large suburban business centers and supermarkets sprawling out over the once remote prairies where I used to hunt rabbits. From my window, as I write, I see two huge new skyscrapers and more are on the way. They too must have water.

Every drop of water out in this country is already appropriated. Speculative cloud seeding is very popular; the water table is sinking as competition for underground water increases; and at the moment, Coloradans on both sides of the mountains are fighting like wildcats over transmountain diversion of water. But if Colorado's water war seems insoluble, there is unanimous agreement between the warriors, civic boosters all: we simply *must* have more people and more industries; we must lure more tourists and corral as many as we can to stay forever. . . .¹⁸

The water wars Ferril mentions have been resolved in part, and Denver has obtained for herself a visible future supply which it is estimated will be sufficient for a city of 1,900,000 residents. A \$75,000,000 bond issue was voted in 1955 to provide for expansions of the water system, including more dams and a new tunnel under the mountains to bring Pacific-slope moisture to Atlantic-slope users.

Water is the limiting factor, but now that there seems to be enough of it, at least for immediate purposes, the heady ardors of aggrandizement can be resumed and Tom Ferril's dark apprehensions tucked away deep and unragging in the Denver subconscious. Denver probably has been no more blatant about it all than any other American city on the prod, and most citizens recognize the growth ceiling which water imposes. At the same time it is for the most part pleasant and invigorating to be involved with a growing thing. Residents of some years' standing are modestly pleased to have several hundred thousand new arrivals confirm their prior judgment that Denver is the best place to live. And the newcomers themselves are enjoying the excitements and advantages of metropolitan life with sun, green, and Mount Evans thrown into the bargain.

Ray Perkins, whose name and tinkling piano are well known to any radio fan of the twenties and thirties, is one of the newcomers. He

¹⁸Thomas Hornsby Ferril, "Tourists, Stay Away from My Door," *Harper's*, May 1954, pp. 77-78.

sketched an outline of the new Denver's special brand of civic pride in a bit of patter set to music for the Newspaper Guild's 1950 Gridiron Show:

Oh there's no place like Denver,
It sure is a wonderful town.
The women are pretty, the men are so witty,
In fact, we admit it's the world's greatest city.
Our mayor is no cheap politician,
He takes no political trail,
Quigg Newtral, we're sure, will remain sweet and pure
For the honor of Denver and Yale.
Oh there's no place like Denver,
Where a smile takes the place of a frown.
Our traffic's a problem—the worst in the West—
Mister Barnes keeps on trying, and gives us no rest;
He's driving us nuts, but it's all for the best,
And it sure is a wonderful town—
A most remarkable town.

So the remarkable town grew and flourished. And so did the *Rocky Mountain News*—but at an even more rapid rate.

Men who came back to the *News* staff after the war were bemused and delighted by what had happened and was continuing to happen to the threadbare sheet they had left. The figures Mary Barron and Margaret Kelly sent up from the circulation department were scarcely believable. A new golden age was arriving.

By 1950 a newspaper which had been at death's doorway only seven years earlier was making a name for itself in national ratings. On August 26 a full-page house ad appeared to suggest that “. . . Maybe We Shouldn't Hide Our Light under a Bushel.”

In a decade of accelerating growth, The *Rocky Mountain News* has become one of the big, important morning newspapers of America.

Among all morning tabloid newspapers, the daily circulation of The *News* is exceeded only by two in New York, one in Boston, and one in Chicago. . . .

The *News* ranks third among all tabloid morning newspapers in advertising lineage. Our total is surpassed only by the New York *Daily News* and the Chicago *Sun-Times*. The *News* ranks fourth among all tabloids—morning or evening—just behind these two and the Los Angeles *Daily News*. . . .

The *News*' penetration, or coverage, of Denver and the retail trading zone is much greater than that of any New York, Chicago, Philadelphia or Los Angeles daily newspaper, and is much more complete than that of many first-circulation newspapers, such as the notable *Detroit News*, *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* or *San Francisco Examiner*. . . .

In certain classifications The News leads such powerful newspapers as: Atlanta Constitution, Detroit Free Press, San Francisco Chronicle, Los Angeles Examiner, Dallas News, Indianapolis Star, New York Herald Tribune.

In July, The News reached the highest circulation, daily and Sunday, in 91 years [129,585 daily, 139,994 Sunday]. It is a gain of more than 100 percent in five years and the figure was reached without premiums, insurance offers or similar stimulants.

Should we hide our light under a bushel? This advertising and circulation growth has made newspaper history in America. These have been exciting years.

Three factors have been equally important in this dramatic success story. They are: (1) the alert, intelligent, receptive public of Denver and the West, which has appreciated the *new* News and rewarded it with increasing patronage and readership; (2) the sound judgment of Denver advertisers, who have increasingly depended on The News as a partner and a strong constructive force in the development of their own businesses; and finally (3) the quality and vivid newsworthiness of the News *as a newspaper*.

One hundred per cent growth in five years. It was more than the city itself or any other of its institutions had experienced. Circulation of the daily News broke over the 100,000 mark in 1948, and the Sunday News had made it a year earlier. Advertising lineage followed the steep curve upward. Far behind were the slim, sixteen-page leaflets of the war years. The News now was publishing sixty or more pages daily, a hundred or more on Sundays.

Morale and self-assurance rose with the indicators of material success. News handling became more confident and sure. Editorials began to speak once again in a language which assumed people were listening. Political victories were won. The occasional campaigns—such as that which backed the Sabin health code—were forceful and effective. Professional awards and honors came to staff members, and Bill Peery's camera was winning for him a steady procession of national prizes. The staff grew in size to meet the demands of wider and deeper coverage. Specialists were developed in such fields as education, medicine, science, and water resources. The luxuries which make superior journalism possible, and which are all but denied to impoverished newspapers however courageous, were returning to the News. For the first time in forty years the paper was back in the stature it had enjoyed in the days when its readers called it "Old Reliable" and it was the prime mentor and first champion of a frontier town.

The narrow, cramped plant at 1720 Welton Street which had seemed a veritable temple of the "art preservative" when it was built in 1901 became, by 1949, confining and inefficient for the rapidly expanding operation. The News began to look around for a new home. Scripps-

Howard officials and real estate experts came to town in April to survey the situation, and Roy Howard and G. B. Parker arrived in July for further talks. Howard made a return visit to Champa Street for a detailed appraisal of the old plant of the *Denver Post*, which also was planning expansion. A rumor made the rounds that the *News* might buy and convert the Sears, Roebuck retail store on Broadway, later remodeled into the United States National Bank Building of the Mile High Center. Finally business manager Bill Hailey announced on December 9 the purchase of eleven lots at 400 West Colfax Avenue, west across Delaware Street from the Denver Mint. The site then was occupied by a string of one-story stores, some run-down flats, and a few old residences doing service as rooming and apartment houses. It offered a half block (125 feet) of frontage on busy West Colfax, which carries transcontinental Highway 40 through Denver, and 275 feet of depth south along still tree-lined Delaware Street.

Buildings on the site were wrecked and removed during 1950 and excavation started in November. Construction of the new printing office began April 19, 1951, under supervision of the Austin Company of Cleveland, specialists in the design and erection of publishing plants.

Meanwhile, as the red brick and reinforced concrete plant took shape, the *News* was making do with the creaking old office on Welton Street—and crowding another 5000 gain in circulation out of the two timeworn presses.

The ancient double-deckers were threshing away at the home edition early on the morning of January 29, 1951, when the *News* lost its noblest Roman. A heart attack claimed Lee Casey, friend of all the ancients and nearly everyone of importance in Denver, as the presses rolled out Chapter VIII (the Peloponnesian War) of "Uncle Lee's History of the World." The Peloponnesian War, he had written, could be called the "Irreconcilable Conflict."

For, after close to 24 centuries, the supreme issue had not been settled. Yet it may be settled during our lifetimes. Technically, the war was between Athens and Sparta. Actually, it was a war between two ways of life—just as the war in which Americans are dying today. There are no exact parallels in history. But there are some similarities. And the similarity of this war in the Fifth Century B.C. and the war in Korea is quite close. . . .

The Attica of that day, including Athens, had rather less than Denver's present population; Sparta, with its subject towns and villages, perhaps slightly more. Yet there could be no actual compromise. For the Athenians . . . believed that the state should be the servant of the people. The Spartans believed, with equal intensity, that the people should be the slaves of the state. That was the ageless contest between the free spirit and the closed mind. . . .

As we know, the Athenians lost the war. Probably they deserved to

lose it. For they forsook their own principles. Freedom of speech and freedom of thought were preserved for Athenians, slaves excepted, but for Athenians alone. . . .

Next day George V. Kelly, later administrative assistant to Mayor Will Nicholson, Quigg Newton's successor, wrote the obituary. Memorial services were conducted in the Episcopal Cathedral of St. John's-in-the-Wilderness on February 1. Dr. Robert L. Stearns, then president of the University of Colorado, delivered the principal eulogy to an assembly which included most of the city's top civic and business leaders, waitresses, bartenders, panhandlers, cops, clergymen and professors, gamblers, bellhops, and at least one bootblack. The 38th General Assembly paused in its legislative labors to adopt a memorial.

For about five years before his death Casey had been ribbing the local undertakers by "shopping around" publicly for his funeral and reporting his findings in his column. He wanted, he said, something "neat but not gaudy. . . ."

. . . What I'm trying to arrange is a nice, pleasant, rather quiet sort of affair, without jukeboxes or quartets—you know, as modest and dignified and enjoyable as the situation might warrant. . . .

Being a thoughtful sort, I got the idea it would be nice for the folks if I got my funeral arrangements out of the way and especially if I got them paid for in advance. Having lived on credit all my life, I imagined it would be pleasant to die with a receipted bill all ready for the mourners, if any. That would make the parting less of a sweet sorrow, if you know what I mean. . . .

I wished no more than the low limit as to hacks, especially in view of the fact that I did not expect a large turnout—no civic celebration, in other words—and there was no need for him [the undertaker] to prepare a large bouquet carrying the message "From Al"—or "From Charley," for that matter. Although I would not haggle about the matter, I thought cremation preferable. Actually, I thought I was being very nice about the whole deal, making it as cheap as possible for myself and as easy as possible for the spectators to endure. . . .

The rock-bottom price, Lee reported, was \$127.50, which he ruled was too costly. "So, although I feel the smack of age in me, some relish of the saltiness of time, I think I'll keep right on living for a while." Casey died, in the fine old Western expression, with his boots on. He was a winter soldier, and a craftsman; he would have preferred to go out with the presses pounding.

Lee had requested cremation. In September 1953 his ashes were placed within the brick wall of the lobby of the new building on West Colfax and the opening sealed with a small bronze plaque: "Here Rest the Ashes of Lee Taylor Casey Beloved by His Fellow Workers and the Readers of the Rocky Mountain News for Forty Years. 1889-1951."

The death of Casey left a large gap and many memories.

As the staff adjusted to his absence Bob Chase moved up to fill the vacant post of associate editor, city editor Vince Dwyer became managing editor, and Dan Cronin took the city desk. Cronin had been succeeded by Bill Brenneman by the time the new building was ready for occupancy in May of 1952.

The plant had cost \$1,000,000 to build and another \$1,500,000 to equip. There were 75,000 square feet of space on two floors and a cavernous basement for the reel rooms of the presses and storage of 1500 tons of newsprint and 4000 gallons of ink. The structure occupied full width of the site and 200 feet of its depth. The rear 75 feet were reserved for loading docks and the maneuvering and maintenance of circulation and paper-handling trucks. Installed in the pressroom were ten units of Hoc color-convertible presses which raised capacity from 80 to 128 pages at a speed of 45,000 copies an hour. (By 1956 it was necessary to add another four units.) The first floor contained advertising, business, and circulation offices in the front and the mailing room at the rear. Editorial offices were fitted out across the breadth of the second floor, with composing room, stereotyping and engraving departments to the rear. Into the composing room went twenty-five typesetting machines. (Today there are twenty-nine.)

Moving days, as they always are, were proud ones. The *News* flooded its readers with statistics, historical summaries, and an item-by-item account of the transfer. Police reporter Ken Wayman, the paper said, had refused to be shut out of the excitement of the moving. He had turned his desk around in the pressroom at the Police Building. Sam Lusky, who was covering a trial at West Side Court, would symbolically switch chairs at the press table. Open-house receptions were held for a full week after the first editions rolled from the new presses dated June 1, 1952. Then the *News* got back to business of growing spectacularly. There were now 350 employees compared with 125 in 1940.

The old building Tom Patterson had built in his back yard on Welton Street was converted into lavish temporary quarters for the Denver Club, then homeless while its new skyscraper was being built. Columnist Marranzino reported on April 9, 1953, that "old newspaper plants never die; they go out in bursts of technicolor." The entryway at the foot of the steep stairs had been redone in pink and black with sketches copied from drawings by Michelangelo. Ed Hamlyn's engraving department now was the private barbershop, with personal shaving mugs bearing leading Denver names. A chichi ladies' dining room with imitation french doors leading out to gardens of wallpaper flowers occupied the approximate former locations of the desks of George Dyer and Delmas Corey, Bob Boyd's veteran assistant circulation managers. The composing room had bloomed out in yellow and green. Darlene Wycoff discovered

on a visit a few days after Marranzino's that the pressroom had become a wine cellar and the city room held billiard tables. She also noted that simulated windows of leaded glass had been installed to block any untoward views into the Orient Hotel. The Denver Club occupied its glorified newspaper office for about two years. Then, in February and March of 1955, the building was scrapped. The site now is a parking lot.

At the new building Bob Chase completed the revision Lee Casey had started of the *News'* style book for its staff writers. Chase's admonitions in the 1953 edition were brief and to the point:

The Style Book . . . does not take the place of the dictionary or the grammar books. A writer consults these whenever necessary. This applies to sports writers as well as writers in other departments. . . .

In general, we aim at brevity, clarity and accuracy.

Use short words, short sentences, short paragraphs. . . .

Write as simply as possible to make reading easy for your reader.

Write dialect only with special permission. Animals may speak only with special permission of the city editor.

Be sure quotations are accurate, in meaning as well as letter, and that they sound that way. Try to keep the language pure in quotations, but don't go high hat.

The written word is usually slightly more formal than the spoken. But most of us do not speak, even for quotation, as a professor of philosophy would write. . . .

By 1954 circulation had topped 150,000 daily, up 214 per cent since 1942 in the metropolitan area and 252 per cent over all. Advertising in the same period had gained 39 per cent to 18,656,360 lines, a total greater for the year than that published by such prominent papers as the *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, *Chicago Sun-Times*, *San Francisco Chronicle*, *New York Mirror*, *Hartford Courant*, and *Providence Journal*.¹⁸ (Table III, p. 589, details the *News'* rise from its dark days of the thirties.)

All of this against competition which was never gentle. The *Post* was still publishing in Denver, though much less flamboyantly than in the garish days of Bonfils and Tammen. It became a much-chastened newspaper with the arrival in 1946 of Palmer Hoyt of the *Portland Oregonian* as editor and publisher. The "Paper with the Heart and Soul" still has the larger circulation and publishes more advertising, but the *News* now has far outstripped its onetime dominating rival in rates of gain. In 1954, for example, the *News'* city-zone circulation increase over 1942 was 214 per cent while the *Post's* was 54 per cent. In 1957 the *News* gained 211,037 lines of advertising over 1956. The *Post* lost 676,299 lines. But the *Post*

¹⁸*Media Records*, 1954.

is a young newspaper; great things may be expected of it once it sloughs off its adolescent chubbiness.

The *News*, once the weakest sister in the Scripps-Howard family, now publishes more advertising than all but three papers in the chain—the *Pittsburgh Press*, *Memphis Commercial-Appeal*, and the *Cleveland Press*. And a study by the New Orleans *Times-Picayune* for March 1958 shows that the *News* ranked third—after the *Kansas City Times* and the *Washington Post-Times-Herald*—among all the morning newspapers of the nation in the intensity with which it covers its town with city-zone subscribers and retail sales. The *Chicago Tribune* stood in eleventh place, the *New York Daily News* twelfth, the *New York Times* thirty-second, and the *New York Herald Tribune* thirty-third.

TABLE III
ROCKY MOUNTAIN NEWS GROWTH, 1932-1958

	Circulation (12-month average)		Advertising Linage (12-month total)
	DAILY	SUNDAY	
1932	36,464	45,797	5,228,716
1933	34,941	41,920	5,696,133
1934	33,421	42,257	5,400,027
1935	35,796	44,106	5,274,608
1936	37,417	44,755	5,133,601
1937	38,749	44,620	4,932,410
1938	38,189	43,466	4,214,461
1939	39,044	42,501	3,843,788
1940	40,209	43,820	3,785,309
1941	43,487	46,589	4,150,620
1942	45,752	50,589	3,875,944
1943	51,319	53,434	4,271,819
1944	56,526	57,015	3,841,637
1945	59,057	59,653	4,047,670
1946	72,356	76,627	6,162,179
1947	91,913	103,826	7,164,056
1948	108,100	119,048	10,452,888
1949	119,954	130,689	12,100,642
1950	129,585	139,994	13,663,743
1951	141,524	150,281	14,672,662
1952	144,646	154,571	16,782,931
1953	145,866	154,791	18,046,229
1954	149,079	155,031	18,656,360
1955	154,877	159,293	22,011,113
1956	159,936	163,550	22,544,071
1957	157,358	165,846	22,755,108
1958	160,155	165,039	23,291,809

SOURCES: Auditor's reports, Audit Bureau of Circulations; *Media Records*. The circulation totals for 1958 are for six months ended Sept. 30.

It was an improbable and dramatic comeback for a newspaper which so often had been snatched from the brink of the grave. Several persons have attempted to explain it.

Ken Bundy, a *News* alumnus, said in his Gunnison, Colorado, *Courier*: "... we are thankful for the resurgence of the *News*. We are not sure Denver would do nearly so well with only one newspaper; and few people realize today how narrow the margin was between giving up the paper and continuing publication. Jack Foster is quick to give credit to all his staff, but perhaps to him belongs the greatest personal credit. He probably worked longer hours, without ever a moment's loss of enthusiasm from a thousand setbacks (and we can remember scores of them) than anybody who ever held the editorship of a metropolitan daily newspaper. . . ."²⁰

From retirement, Bill Hailey comments: "No one feature makes a newspaper, but Molly Mayfield has certainly made an outstanding contribution. Good sports coverage is important, women's interest news a must and a spread of advertising is also essential. . . . If there is a general statement that spells our success, it's giving the public something it liked and were willing to pay for, and to do that we had to build teamwork inside. Jack and I really were the quarterbacks who called signals for the best newspaper team in the whole country."

Jack Foster also ticks off several factors: "War—the big news commanded much interest and got us started on the way. Paper rationing, it developed, was a blessing in disguise. It helped us train our staff in writing and editing more tightly. Molly Mayfield, of course. Then there were the intangibles involved in the loosening up of the staff, getting more freedom in writing, giving each man a feeling he was important. We got a liveliness and a humanizing of the news which was dramatically different from what the *Post* was doing. We were after circulation rather than revenue, and it showed in the kind of paper we got out."

Jack Howard feels that "no one thing was wholly responsible. There was a series of fortunate situations. The change in format to a tabloid was dramatic, a shock treatment. The expansion and transformation of Denver was a big factor. Between 1926 and 1939, there was little or no change in Denver, as I observed the town. But between 1941 and 1946 there was a huge change. The war helped the paper in that it benefited from the great increased interest in news. The personalities of Jack and Bill were important. Jack's a kind of romantic guy. He fell in love with Denver and Colorado, and he's in tune with the country. He's a poet and has warmth in depth. Sensitive to people. And he's a reporter, too—that's basic."

Roy Howard puts it bluntly: "The secret of the success in Denver? There are many factors, but with a newspaper, as with a ball team, success

²⁰Quoted in *Colorado Editor*, July 1952, p. 18.

usually centers on two men—the battery. On a ball team it is the pitcher and the catcher who form the battery. On a newspaper it is the editor and the business manager.

"The *Rocky Mountain News* flashed to success with a journalistic battery consisting of Jack Foster as the editor, and Bill Hailey as the business manager. Being myself a product of the editorial department, not only my judgment, but my prejudice, necessitates my rating Jack Foster as the number one factor in the paper's successful re-birth. However, as I am quite sure Jack Foster does, I rate Bill Hailey's business management as an outstanding contribution to the paper's spectacular come-back. With a business manager less efficient and less co-operative, the editor's best efforts would have been under a great handicap."

In remaking his newspaper editor Foster had to capture the attention and good wishes of a city much distracted by its own dynamics. The years were busy ones, and reporters were kept on the hop getting it all down on paper, the great and the small.

Horse and dog racing came to tracks in the suburban fringe after pari-mutuel betting was legalized. The Denver Bears baseball team was revived in 1946 and became, for a time, the leading farm for the training of rising young New York Yankees. Voting machines replaced the hand-marked ballot. Television arrived in 1952 after being delayed several years by the national "freeze" on new stations. The old gilt and plush Broadway Theater, where Anna Held and Edwin Booth once emoted, was wrecked in the remodeling of the Cosmopolitan Hotel.

The Denver Club, lair of political and financial king-makers, gave way to a skyscraper at Seventeenth Street and Glenarm Place. Old City Hall came down, and a crowd of 300,000 persons, largest ever, turned out to watch dynamiters blast to earth a tall smokestack, landmark relic of the mining days and all that remained of the Omaha & Grant Smelter.

California and Stout became Denver's first one-way streets in 1949. Henry A. Barnes, who now wrestles with Baltimore motorists, was appointed city traffic engineer in 1947 and a year later inaugurated the "Barnes Dance," an experiment in organized confusion by which pedestrians are permitted to cut diagonally across downtown intersections while automobiles wait. The system gave rise to the new traffic lights, now in use in many cities, which command pedestrians to "Walk."

Shopping centers with malls, flower gardens, and acres of parking space began to appear in residential districts. The taxpayers built a \$2,000,000 annex to City Auditorium and then remodeled the old portion into a municipal theater and concert hall. The Denver Symphony made strides under Saul Caston, once associate conductor to Ormandy in Philadelphia. Tax money put up the \$2,600,000 Denver Coliseum in the Stockyards district, principally for the annual National Western Stock Show but also used for circuses, conventions, and ice skating. Municipal parking garages were erected at a cost of \$4,000,000—and

made only a slight dent in the need for auto room. The last streetcar rolled through town on June 3, 1950, giving way first to trolley coaches and finally to motor busses. The people of Denver voted \$21,000,000 in bonds for their school system in 1948, another \$30,000,000 in 1952.

General Eisenhower came to vacation before taking over command of NATO forces, and President Eisenhower returned to rest, golf, fish for trout, paint mountains, and then to suffer a heart attack. The Air Force Academy got its start at Lowry Field before moving south to its new campus against the foothills north of Colorado Springs. Four million dollars worth of improvements went into Stapleton Airfield. Helicopters began hovering over the city with their throbbing blades. The City Park Zoo added an elephant and a hippopotamus.

One awkward moment incident to the booming was hushed up. The vast oil development—Colorado produced 3,000,000 barrels in 1944, 32,000,000 in 1954—was being watched from afar. It was made the occasion of a state visit and inspection tour by the chief of an oil-rich Middle East principality who will be designated as the Emir of Onam lest an international incident be provoked. The Emir settled himself in the Presidential Suite at the Brown Palace and summoned his hosts. Delightful city, everything just fine. And now would they be so kind as to supply him with a female companion for the duration of his stay. Blonde, he specified. If the part-time odalisque proved pleasing, the Emir promised, she would have a diamond for her navel. Denver's official greeters coughed, shuffled their feet, and consulted the State Department protocol officer attached to the royal party. The diplomat submitted that, naturally, he could say nothing officially . . . but . . . well . . . Middle East oil *was* rather important. There are in town gentlemen of low habits who claim to have seen the diamond, a large one.

One thing and another, the forties and fifties were lively days for Denver. The city was a little astonished at itself, amazed but mostly delighted at the fantasy of growth. Residents who had lived in the town through only a few of the sleepy prewar years shook their heads and talked like oldest settlers: "Why, I can remember when . . ." One could almost halfway believe in the prediction of Governor Gilpin that Denver would become the veritable pivot of all Creation.

Yet through it all Denver has clung to many of the folkways of the city it used to be. The manner is relaxed and easy. It's a first-name town, and a resident for any length of time at all grouches about the new hubbub when he fails to meet at least one person he knows in every block of a stroll down Seventeenth Street. Citizens begrudge the loss of each tree to the widening of boulevards. The proliferation of traffic lights and one-way streets is resented as a creeping invasion of traditional Western freedoms, even while it is admitted that it would be impossible to get through the city without them. The times are dynamic, for sure, and all the new activity and diversity is vitalizing and profitable—and

yet the noise level is rising, the old-timers say, and people seem to be more in a hurry, less neighborly than they once were.

Jack Foster, who is neighborly, still is on the job, and his newspaper, down to the moment of the closing of this chronicle, still was advancing.

And Denver still was thriving.

The mid-century years remade the city and its oldest institution, but the two of them seemed likely to take their joint renaissance in stride. They can remember when they both lost their heads over gold dust, and there was the grand day they turned out with the crowds to welcome the railroad. Denver and the *Rocky Mountain News* have seen a lot of commotion these first one hundred years, together all the way.

Epilogue

Sunrise Edition

ANNIVERSARIES are real nice parties—for those who are having them. The guests of honor are swept up and mildly exhilarated by a decent pride and certain passing illusions of immortality. Those who drop around to pay their respects warm themselves, briefly, in the glow. But only briefly. Proper words of congratulation are murmured about the achievement of the tenth, fiftieth, or hundredth milepost, and then everyone gets back to the more immediate business of living his own biography. The human capacity to sing “Happy birthday to you . . .” with conviction falls somewhere short, it must be conceded, of perfect empathy.

People are not attracted to Denver because it is a place of honorable antiquity. They live there because it is vital, alive, and youthful, a pleasant place of sun, elbow room, and expanding opportunity. The sum of a city’s birthdays is less important than its personality, schools for the children, and the possibilities it offers for the good life, by whatever definition.

And people do not subscribe to a newspaper merely because it is a hundred years old. The patrons of the *Rocky Mountain News* grow steadily in number for other reasons less antiquarian in flavor. But continuity is involved, and character.

The past is indeed prologue, and neither the personality of a city nor the character of a newspaper is acquired offhand. Both are earned over the years. Some of the years of a city, and of a newspaper, have to be lived down. Others can be lived up to. Denver and the *News* have shared a few of each kind, and no experience is ever truly lost on a man, a city, or a journal.

Right now all portents are bright, and this joint story should end on a modestly rising inflection. Perhaps a symbol or two would be in mood.

A newspaper in whose columns is preserved the whole of the history of a city and a state might well borrow, in all humility, the words cast in bronze at the entrance to the Government Printing Office in Washington and printed (both more appropriately and more perdurably) on aged, stained paper in an Edinburgh print shop:

THIS IS A
PRINTING-OFFICE
CROSS-ROADS OF CIVILIZATION
REFUGE OF ALL THE ARTS AGAINST THE RAVAGES OF TIME
ARMORY OF FEARLESS TRUTH AGAINST WHISPERING RUMOR
INCESSANT TRUMPET OF TRADE
FROM THIS PLACE WORDS MAY FLY ABROAD
NOT TO PERISH AS WAVES OF SOUND BUT FIXED IN TIME
NOT CORRUPTED BY THE HURRYING HAND BUT VERIFIED IN
PROOF
FRIEND, YOU STAND ON SACRED GROUND:
THIS IS A PRINTING-OFFICE

But for the *News* there are symbols closer at hand. A visitor who enters through the glass doors of the printing office on West Colfax Avenue in Denver, Colorado, can see them any day and make his own selection.

Facing the entrance is a reproduction of the Scripps-Howard lighthouse and its familiar slogan, "Give Light and the People Will Find Their Own Way." The motto generally is ascribed to Dante, but the lineage is obscure. Carl McGee, crusading Western editor, adopted the words and the illustrative lighthouse for his Albuquerque *Tribune* early in the 1920s, and Roy Howard passed them along to the rest of the papers. Scholars have tried to trace down the origins in Dante. The closest they have come are Lines 67-69 in Purgatory XXII of *The Divine Comedy*: "*Facesti come quei che va di notte che porta il lume dietro e a se non giova ma dopo se fa le persone dotte.*" Literally: "Thou didst as one who passing through the night bears a light behind, that profits not himself but makes those who follow wise." Somewhere along the way this was edited and condensed into the motto McGee admired, a slogan singularly appropriate for a newspaper. Newspapers often proclaim themselves to be the "voice" of something or other, usually large and far-flung, or they promise to print everything that can decently be printed, or they are, simply, the greatest of a given segment of geography up to and including the globe. The *News* promises only to turn on the light.

In the lobby of the *News* building there is on permanent exhibit an old hand press similar to the one which gave Colorado its first newspaper on the stormy night of April 22, 1859. Looking down from one wall is an oil portrait of the founding editor, William N. Byers. It is a primitive painting, and rudely done. The perspective is shallow, the lighting flat and harsh. Brush strokes are crude but bold, the colors earthy, and the approximation of a man which the anonymous artist offers is roughhewn. So, also, were Byers and his times.

On the opposite wall are large photo murals of two breath-takingly beautiful scenes in the Rockies, the towering Tetons of Wyoming and

Berthoud Pass in Colorado. They represent the area the *News* aspires to serve.

Within the wall itself are the ashes of Lee Casey, an enduring part of the structure he helped to build over nearly half of its existence.

And then there is the rugged bronze portrait bust Jo Davidson did of crusty old Edward Wyllis Scripps, who said:

A newspaper is a thing of growth and properly conducted is everlasting.

Perhaps that is the proper punctuation for the story of a newspaper that reported to a new city both atom-powered aircraft and the election of Abraham Lincoln.

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Denver

December 1958

ROBERT L. PERKIN

Bibliography

THE primary source has been the files of the *Rocky Mountain News* itself. Nearly every sentence of this book could carry a footnote reference to some issue of the *News*, but I have sought to spare the casual reader at least some of the citations. Manuscript, periodical, and other sources of a documentary nature are indicated in the footnoting. The following list of books seeks to serve three aims. It is, first, a list of works consulted. It also may be useful as a guide to further reading. Thirdly, no comprehensive bibliography on Denver now exists, and perhaps this can be considered a first essay in that direction, although a few books have been included which deal with general history or journalism and do not touch directly on Denver. No effort has been made to distinguish between primary and secondary sources; the distinction will be apparent to those to whom it is a matter of importance. Where there are several editions, I have cited the edition consulted, which is not always the first and often is merely the most available.

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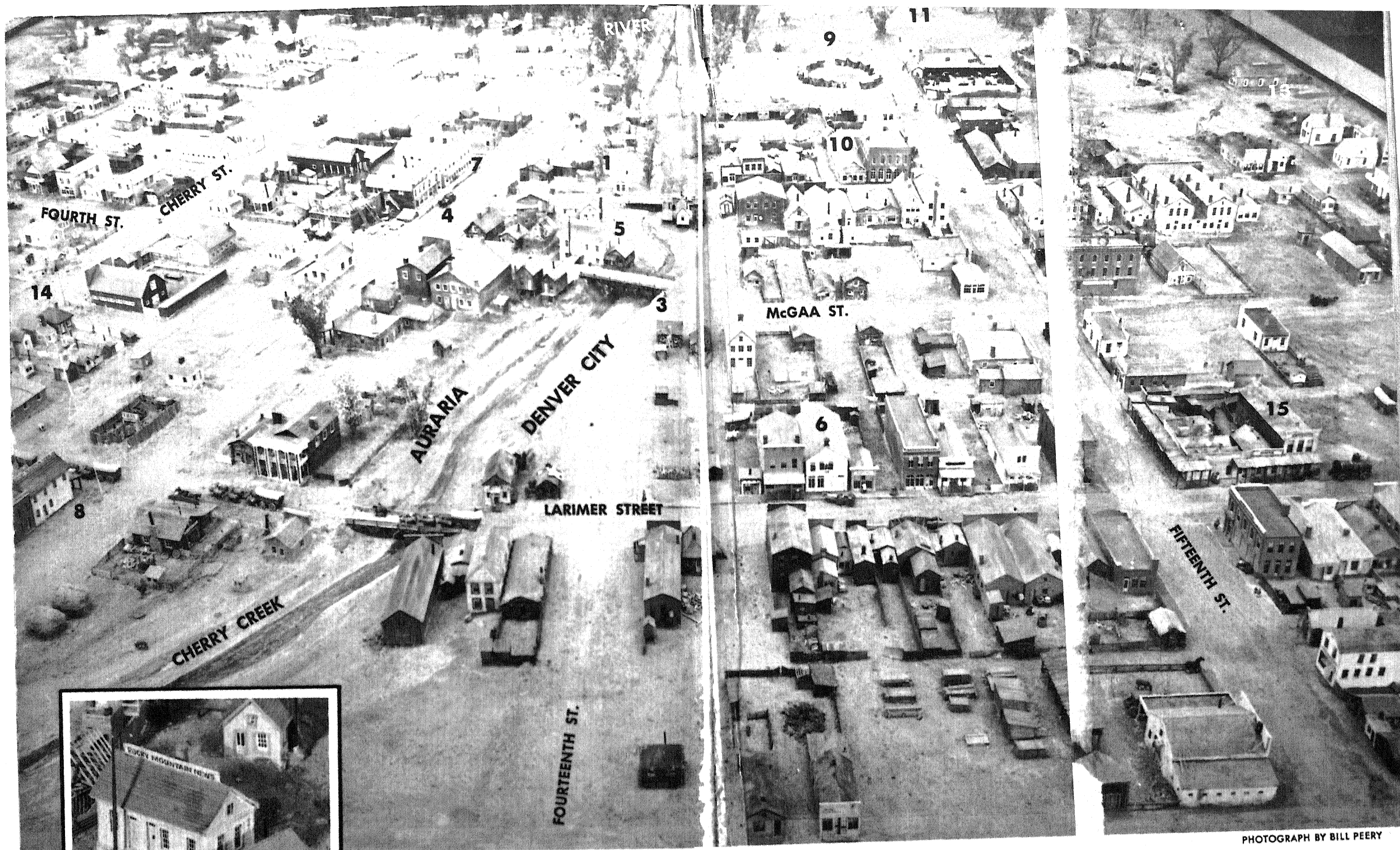
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IN 1860

1. City Hall.
2. Wootton's attic: birthplace of the News.
3. Second home of the News.
4. Third home of the News.
5. The Rocky Mountain News Building washed away in the flood of 1864.
6. The Apollo Theater.
7. Tremont House
8. The Rocky Mountain Herald.
9. Elephant Corral.
10. Denver House.
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